

The Byzantine WORLD

EDITED BY PAUL STEPHENSON

ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΝ ΤΗΣ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΟΜΟΛΟΓΟΥΝΤΑΝ ΤΟΝ ΕΝ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΙΣ ΔΗΜΙΟΥ
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THE BYZANTINE WORLD



The Byzantine World presents the latest insights of the leading scholars in the fields of Byzantine studies, history, art and architectural history, literature and theology. Those who know little of Byzantine history, culture and civilization between AD 700 and 1453 will find overviews and distillations, while those who know much already will be afforded countless new vistas. Each chapter offers an innovative approach to a well-known topic or a diversion from a well-trodden path. Readers will be introduced to Byzantine women and children, men and eunuchs, emperors, patriarchs, aristocrats and slaves. They will explore churches and fortifications, monasteries and palaces, from Constantinople to Cyprus and Syria in the east, and to Apulia and Venice in the west. Secular and sacred art, profane and spiritual literature will be revealed to the reader, who will be encouraged to read, see, smell and touch. The worlds of Byzantine ceremonial and sanctity, liturgy and letters, Orthodoxy and heresy will be explored, by both leading and innovative international scholars. Ultimately, the expert reader, as all will now be, will find insights into the emergences of modern Byzantine studies and of popular Byzantine history.

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Paul Stephenson

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PREFACE



Paul Stephenson

The Byzantine World emerged from conversation at the International Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in London in summer 2006. Richard Stoneman – classicist, historian, author and at the time publisher – attended a number of sessions, including one I had organized with Prof. Dame Averil Cameron. Largely because of Averil’s input, and her insistence that I chair the session, it appeared that I was capable of constructing and directing a compelling international collection of scholars with diverse interests. Maintaining that fiction through conversations with Richard, the project was conceived and placed within the “Routledge Worlds” series. I am grateful, therefore, to both Richard and Averil for their encouragement, but particularly to Averil for commenting on various drafts. I must thank also all those contributors who agreed to write chapters, and subsequently also to act as peer-reviewers for the chapters of others. I thank also the two editorial assistants who dealt with my queries patiently and with great care: Amy Laurens, and more recently Lalle Pursglove. The real editorial assistant was my wife, Brooke Shilling.

“Routledge Worlds” have no fixed format. From the outset we determined not to pursue the approach of *The Late Antique World*, ed. P. Esler, which achieves an encyclopedic range through two long volumes. This was neither desirable nor necessary in Byzantine studies, which for the past two decades has been blessed with *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. Kazhdan, and more recently has seen the publication of a range of handbooks of greater and lesser scope, including now most authoritatively *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack. Nor was the work conceived as a composite history to compete with the excellent *Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. Jonathan Shepard, a contributor to this volume.

This work is unashamedly a collection of essays that covers a very great deal, but far from all, that will interest the student of the Byzantine World. Byzantinists have published a myriad edited volumes and collected studies, most the proceedings of conferences. Consequently, most offer a range of views and voices on particular themes aimed at specialists who frequent academic libraries (they tend to be rather expensive). Remarkably, however, there has been no major general collection of essays aimed at a broader audience of those interested in Byzantine civilization,

culture and history. Certainly, I know of nothing in English on the scale of *The Byzantine World*.

Our aim is to offer the views of specialists to other specialists, certainly, but also to a broader readership. Our target audience – for one must both have and specify such a thing to those creating a marketing strategy – is diverse, messy indeed, for it embraces advanced undergraduates, postgraduate and postdoctoral scholars in all fields of Byzantine and medieval studies, Barnes and Noble browsers and Amazon searchers, Wikipedians seeking more authoritative updates (or sources of information to plagiarize for their updating), and anyone who has bought or read a narrative history of Byzantium and been left wanting a little more. Perhaps those who teach undergraduate courses will look most fondly upon such a collection, and that has partly determined its structure and content.

The Byzantine World provides access to the latest thinking in a broad range of related fields of study. Each chapter offers an innovative approach to a well-known topic or a diversion from a well-trodden path. Readers will be introduced to Byzantine women and children, men and eunuchs, emperors, patriarchs, aristocrats and slaves. They will explore churches and fortifications, monasteries and palaces, from Constantinople to Cyprus and Syria in the east, and to Apulia and Venice in the west. Secular and sacred art, profane and spiritual literature will be revealed to the reader, who will be encouraged to read, see, smell and touch. The worlds of Byzantine ceremonial and sanctity, liturgy and letters, Orthodoxy and heresy will be set out for readers, who will also find insights into the emergence of modern Byzantine studies and of popular Byzantine history. Among those readers I hope will be the Shillings, to whom the volume is dedicated.

Barnes, Friday 13 March 2009

ABBREVIATIONS



AASS	<i>Acta sanctorum</i> , Paris, 1863–1940
AB	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
ABME	Ἀρχεῖον τῶν βυζαντινῶν μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AntJ</i>	<i>The Antiquaries Journal</i>
Ἀρχ.Ποντ.	Ἀρχεῖον Πόντου
<i>ArtB</i>	<i>Art Bulletin</i>
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BCH	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i>
BHG	<i>Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca</i> , 3rd edn, ed. F. Halkin, Subsidia Hagiographica 47, Brussels, 1957; repr. 1969
BHL	<i>Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis</i> , ed. Society of Bollandists, Subsidia Hagiographica 6, Brussels, 1898–1901; repr. 1949
BMFD	<i>Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents</i> , ed. J. P. Thomas and A. C. Hero, Washington, DC, 2000
BMGS	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
BNJ	<i>Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher</i>
BSI	<i>Byzantinoslavica</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
ByzF	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
ByzMetabyz	<i>Byzantina-Metabyzantina</i>
BZ	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CahArch</i>	<i>Cahiers archéologiques</i>
<i>CahCM</i>	<i>Cahiers de civilisation médiévale, Xe–XIIe siècles</i>
CCSG	<i>Corpus christianorum</i> , Series graeca
CFHB	<i>Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae</i>
CIC	<i>Corpus iuris civilis</i> , ed. P. Krüger, Berlin, 1928–9; repr. 1993
CPG	<i>Clavis patrum graecorum</i> , ed. M. Geerard, Turnhout, 1983–7
CPh	<i>Classical Philology</i>

CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
CSHB	<i>Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae</i>
CTh	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i> , ed. T. Mommsen and P. Meyer, Berlin, 1905
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
DOS	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Studies</i>
DSp	<i>Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique</i> , Paris 1932–5
EAM	<i>Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale</i> , 12 vols, Rome, 1991–2002
EEBΣ	Ἑπετηρίς ἐταιρείας βυζαντινῶν σπουδῶν
FM	<i>Fontes minores</i>
GlasSANU	<i>Glas Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti</i>
GOTR	<i>Greek Orthodox Theological Review</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
HJ	<i>Historisches Jahrbuch</i>
HUKSt	<i>Harvard Ukrainian Studies</i>
IstForsch	<i>Istanbuler Forschungen</i>
IstMitt	<i>Istanbuler Mitteilungen</i> , Deutsches Archäologisches Institut
JbBM	<i>Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen</i>
JECrSt	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JMedHist	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
JÖB	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i> ; before 1969, <i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft</i>
JRArch	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSAH	<i>Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians</i>
JWalt	<i>Journal of the Walters Art Gallery</i>
JWarb	<i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i>
LMA	<i>Lexikon des Mittelalters</i> , Munich and Zurich, 1977–95
OCP	<i>Orientalia christiana periodica</i>
ODB	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> , ed. A. Kazhdan, New York and Oxford, 1991
ODCC	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church</i> , 3rd edn, Oxford, 1997
PBE	<i>The Prosopography of the Byzantine Empire</i> , vol. I, ed J. R. Martindale with D. Smythe, Aldershot, 2001.
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i> , Series graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, 1857–66
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i> , Series latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, 1844–80
PLP	<i>Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit</i> , ed. E. Trapp, 12 vols, Vienna, 1976–96
PmbZ	<i>Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit</i> , ed. R.-J. Lilie <i>et al.</i> , 7 vols, Berlin and New York, 1998–2001
PO	<i>Patrologia orientalis</i>
RBK	<i>Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst</i> , ed. K. Wessel, Stuttgart, 1963–
REB	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
RHC Occ.	<i>Recueil des historiens des Croisades: historiens occidentaux</i>

RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
RN	<i>Revue numismatique</i>
RSBN	<i>Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici</i>
RSBS	<i>Rivista di studi bizantini e slavi</i>
SüdostF	<i>Südost-Forschungen</i>
TAPA	<i>Transactions [and Proceedings] of the American Philological Association</i>
TIB	<i>Tabula imperii byzantini</i> , ed. H. Hunger, Vienna, 1976–
TLG	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: A Digital Library of Greek Literature</i> , Irvine, CA, 1972–. http://www.tlg.uci.edu/
TM	<i>Travaux et mémoires</i>
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
VizVrem	<i>Vizantiiskii vremennik</i>
ZPapEpig	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
ZRVI	<i>Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta, Srpska akademija nauka</i>

INTRODUCTION



Paul Stephenson

Why concern ourselves with the Byzantine World? In November 1972 the late Walter Ullmann, Professor of Medieval History at the University of Cambridge, delivered his inaugural lecture. “The Future of Medieval History” laid out his vision for his discipline, and one of its central tenets was the fuller integration of Byzantium into studies of the Middle Ages. “Papal Rome and Imperial Constantinople,” he stated, are “the two cornerstones upon which the development of medieval history” rests, and “the excision of Byzantine history from medieval European studies does indeed seem to me an unforgivable offence against the very spirit of history.”¹ Nearly four decades later, the Byzantine World is still peripheral to the interests of most students of the Medieval World.² However, fascination with the early Christian Late Antique World,³ and with the World of the Crusades,⁴ has thrown Byzantium into sharper relief. All now know that Byzantium stood as the bulwark against Islam for half a millennium between those eras, and persisted through the latter to outlast the Crusader states. Moreover, the intrigues of the imperial court at Constantinople in the sixth and eleventh centuries have long fascinated readers of the Penguin translations of Prokopios’ *Anekdotai* (*Secret History*) and Psellos’ *Chronographia* (*Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*). Many popular accounts in the modern era have exploited these precious texts for considerable commercial success, most recently those by John Julius Norwich, whose efforts mirror those of French writers of grand narrative of a century earlier.

There have also been many more academic attempts to present the Byzantine World to a broader audience. The most successful political history, which Ullmann had surely read as he wrote his inaugural lecture, was by George Ostrogorsky. Ostrogorsky’s *History of the Byzantine State* had appeared in a third revised German edition in 1963, and an authoritative English translation, by Joan Hussey, in 1968.⁵ As a single-authored vision of the entirety of Byzantine history it has not been surpassed, although there are now many supplementary or alternative views of discrete periods and some compelling collections.

In 1971, Dimitri Obolensky offered a compelling vision of the *The Byzantine Commonwealth*. This was a multi-ethnic, linguistically diverse medieval world drawn together by a common culture that emanated from Constantinople, the greatest city

in the western hemisphere, and centre for the empire's cultural production, where flourished art and architecture, literature and learning, bureaucracy and ceremonial. Obolensky restricted his vision to the empire's core, and to its influence on the Slavic periphery, those lands of Eastern Europe and Russia that embraced Orthodox Christianity. But his idea of "Commonwealth," deeply influenced by the developments he witnessed as a resident of Britain in the years after the Second World War, was both too narrow and too broad for many. His thesis has been, in turn, criticized, embraced, ignored, dismissed and rehabilitated.⁶

The Caucasian lands, like those of southern Italy, were largely ignored by Obolensky; their role in his Commonwealth was peripheral. More recently their significance to the survival and reorientation of the middle Byzantine empire has been fully established. Armenians and Georgians, not Slavs nor Greeks, formed the core of an aristocracy that transformed the empire between 800 and 1100. Their integration into the Greek core saw the reconfiguration of the kingdoms and churches of Armenia and Georgia, but also prefigured the rise of autonomous "shadow empires" in Bulgaria and Serbia. These parallels over centuries demand closer investigation. Byzantium and the Caucasian lands were, moreover, in constant contact with Muslim neighbours, from the beginnings of Islam in the seventh century,⁷ to the fall of the empire to the Ottoman Turks in the fifteenth. In this period Islamic empires rose and fell: the Umayyads, the Abbasids, the Fatimids and others interacted with Byzantines, and through them with the rest of Europe. These contacts took many forms, but both trade and war were most often to the fore. Diplomatic exchanges were frequent, and gifts were commonly exchanged. These transmitted ideas as surely as did the debates between Christian and Muslim scholars and theologians, rulers and clerics, that are recorded throughout the Byzantine millennium.⁸

These areas and many more are addressed most recently in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire*, which offers a new political history, and far more, of the Byzantine World. It expands upon the more approachable *Oxford History of Byzantium*, which featured chapters by many of the same scholars.⁹ Similarly, *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* complements *the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, offering far longer, but still compact "entries" on key themes and concepts.¹⁰ These are now the key tools for scholars. However, the wonders of Byzantine art and architecture continue to fire the popular imagination. Major collections in the museums in various European capitals have long attracted the discerning eye to Byzantine art and architecture, but it is the grand occasional exhibitions that have drawn the largest crowds. Only the most respected and well-connected curators have successfully gathered the empire's treasures in one place, most recently introducing priceless icons preserved in the monastery of St Catherine on Mt Sinai to the more familiar ivory and parchment, silver and gold masterpieces. The most popular have been the three blockbusters staged at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art: *The Age of Spirituality* (in 1977–8), *The Glory of Byzantium* (in 1997) and *Byzantium: Faith and Power* (in 2004).¹¹ Together, these have guided the persistent visitor of a certain vintage through the three phases of Byzantium, which one might more prosaically call early, middle and late. There are no exact beginning and ends. The catalogues to these exhibitions are enduring testaments and works of profound scholarship, but now the preserve of research libraries rather than coffee tables.

The attempts by art historians in the last years of the twentieth century to bring

the whole Byzantine World together owe much to the particular trajectory of their discipline. Historians of Byzantine art and architecture were from the outset moved to consider its contribution to the Renaissance in Italy, and more broadly its relationship to European art and architecture. Ruskin, in the mid-nineteenth century, promoted the Byzantine architectural achievement, at least as mediated by Venice. And even if, until well into the twentieth century, it was broadly held that Byzantine art, generally meaning the art of Constantinople, developed differently from art in the West, still comparison demanded a broader vision.¹² In contrast, through the later nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century the study of Byzantine history, before Ostrogorsky and Obolensky, was fissiparous, its history written and read through competing national and cultural prisms. Those concerned with words, not images, mined the same texts, largely in Greek, to produce composite source collections, tearing works apart to shreds for a higher purpose and offering vernacular translations of pertinent “gobbets.” They followed a well-trodden path, for the first Byzantine histories to be translated in the West were held, to a greater or lesser extent, to illuminate the pasts of Italians and Germans, and Latin translations were published without reference to the Greek originals.¹³

In those countries without a Byzantine past, it was mostly classical philologists, with the necessary background in Greek and Latin languages and literatures, who studied the Byzantine World. All were aware that the preservation of their ancient texts was the work of the Byzantines, and a few moved into the later period to examine continuity and change. Of those, many found it wanting, condemning the debased language, and derivative, “scissors and paste,” literature. J. B. Bury was a noteworthy exception in the Anglo-American academy: at the beginning of the twentieth century he held, in turn, chairs in Greek at Trinity College Dublin and in Modern History at Cambridge. Bury published extensively in both disciplines, and, fortunately for modern Byzantine studies, devoted much of his time to the history and literature of what he always called the Eastern Roman Empire. Few scholars afterwards enjoyed Bury’s range of expertise, and consequently the history of the Byzantine World has tended to fall between two stools: that one on which classicists sit, and that of historians, medieval and modern. The former tend to lack interest in historical questions, the latter the linguistic skills to answer the questions they wish to pose. Moreover, Bury took little interest in theology and none at all in the history of art and architecture, without which, we now would argue, it is impossible to approach the Byzantine World.

Bury had but one postgraduate student during his years in Cambridge: Sir Steven Runciman. It might be said, therefore, that one is enough, and few scholars in established posts are able to attract, still less to fund, large coteries. To do so, moreover, is somewhat irresponsible, since few of those who secure a doctorate in an area of Byzantine studies have a chance of securing a permanent position to teach and research in their chosen field. For the past half-century in Britain and the USA, where Byzantium has been taught it has been most often by dedicated scholars as an addition to their regular duties. But Byzantium is not an easy subject to teach: a proper exploration of the Byzantine World requires the same skills that Bury possessed, but today one must be willing to embrace still more. One must be a skilled practitioner in classical languages and historical methods, possess a considerable appreciation of theology and art history, and an increasing grasp of archaeology. At

research level, one must have at least a passing acquaintance with a range of auxiliary disciplines: epigraphy, numismatics and sigillography – the study of inscriptions, coins and seals – and of palaeography, codicology and diplomatics – the critical study of handwriting, books and archival documents. Regional specialisms require further expertise in modern Greek and Slavic languages and literatures, for the west and north; and for eastern affairs a facility in one or several of Armenian, Georgian, Syriac and Arabic or Turkic languages. This list does not end there, but I think it is clear that Byzantium is challenging to research and to teach.

Increasingly, younger scholars have been willing to take up this challenge, and the recent work of a good number are included in this volume. Thanks to the efforts of a few devoted scholars of longer vintage, who are also contributors, courses in all areas of Byzantine studies have been developed at a number of institutions. And the nature of the modern academy and its research methods has proven an asset in this expansion. Whereas in Bury's day the scholar worked alone, perhaps on occasion seeking the advice of a colleague, increasingly it is recognized that the most effective progress requires co-operation across the boundaries of cognate disciplines. More than this, a multidisciplinary approach is essential for the survival and development of many smaller humanities subjects. Byzantine studies have benefited doubly, ensuring survival by sharing resources, intellectual and material, and by exploring new methods. Of course, similar developments have affected western medievalists and classicists, and that is rather my point: there is now a very real chance that a proper study of the Byzantine World will be considered a core element in courses dedicated to the long period between Rome and the Renaissance. If Byzantium is still peripheral to the interests of most classicists and historians, art historians and theologians, increasingly we all are interested in the peripheral. It is to that end that *The Byzantine World* has been produced.

The essays presented here are intended in the first instance for medievalists who wish to fulfil Ullmann's demand, to learn about and teach the Byzantine World, but whose libraries cannot support such an enterprise. They present aspects of the latest research by scholars who have recently published monographs or undertaken extensive research projects. In some cases, the principal findings are summarized, in others new avenues explored. In each case the author was asked also to present a brief overview of the "state of research." There has been no editorial effort to ensure consistency between essays in the relative weight given to new or synthetic research, although each has elements of both, and an extensive bibliography draws attention to where further insights might be sought. Ultimately, it is hoped those who know little of Byzantine history, culture and civilization between c. AD 700 and 1453 will find useful distillations, while those who know much already will be afforded countless new vistas.

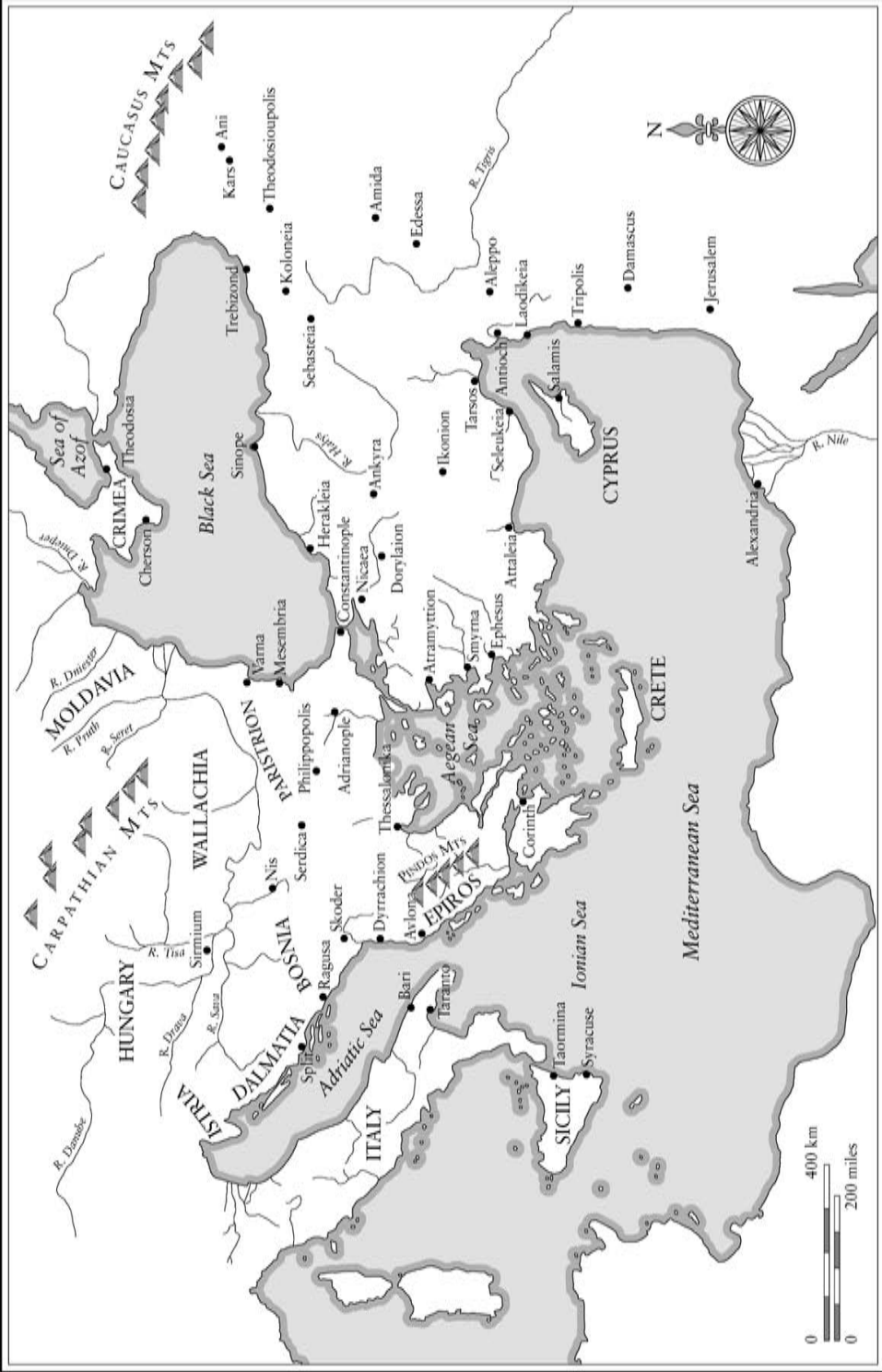
NOTES

- 1 Ullmann 1973: 24–5.
- 2 Linehan and Nelson 2001. But see now the important overview of the discipline offered by Jeffreys *et al.* 2008: 3–20.
- 3 Esler 2000.
- 4 Jotischky 2008.

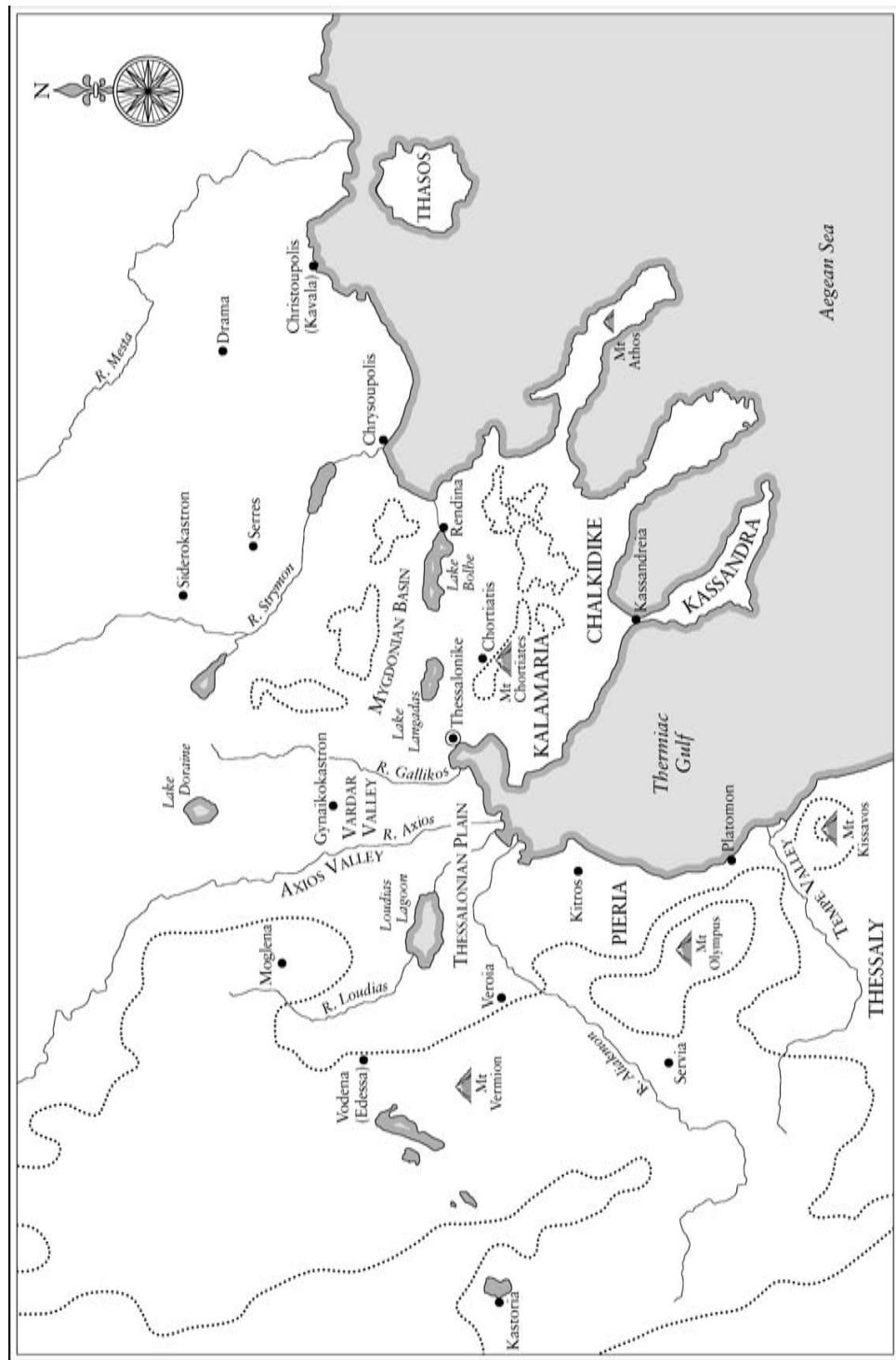
- 5 Ostrogorsky 1963, 1968.
- 6 Obolensky 1971; Shepard 2006b.
- 7 Kaegi 1992.
- 8 El Cheikh 2004.
- 9 Shepard 2008; Mango 2002.
- 10 Jeffreys *et al.* 2008; *ODB*.
- 11 Weitzmann 1979; Evans and Wixom 1997; Evans 2004.
- 12 Jeffreys *et al.* 2008: 10–11.
- 13 See Reinsch in this volume.

MAPS

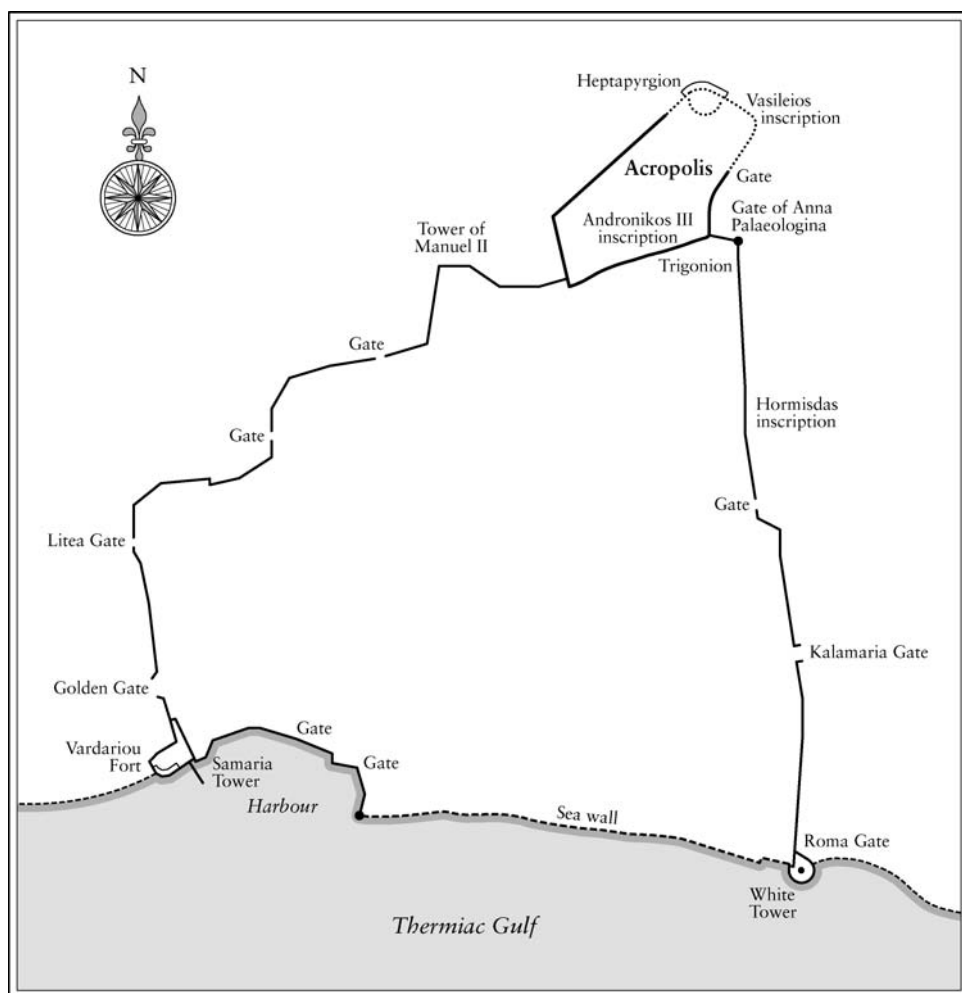




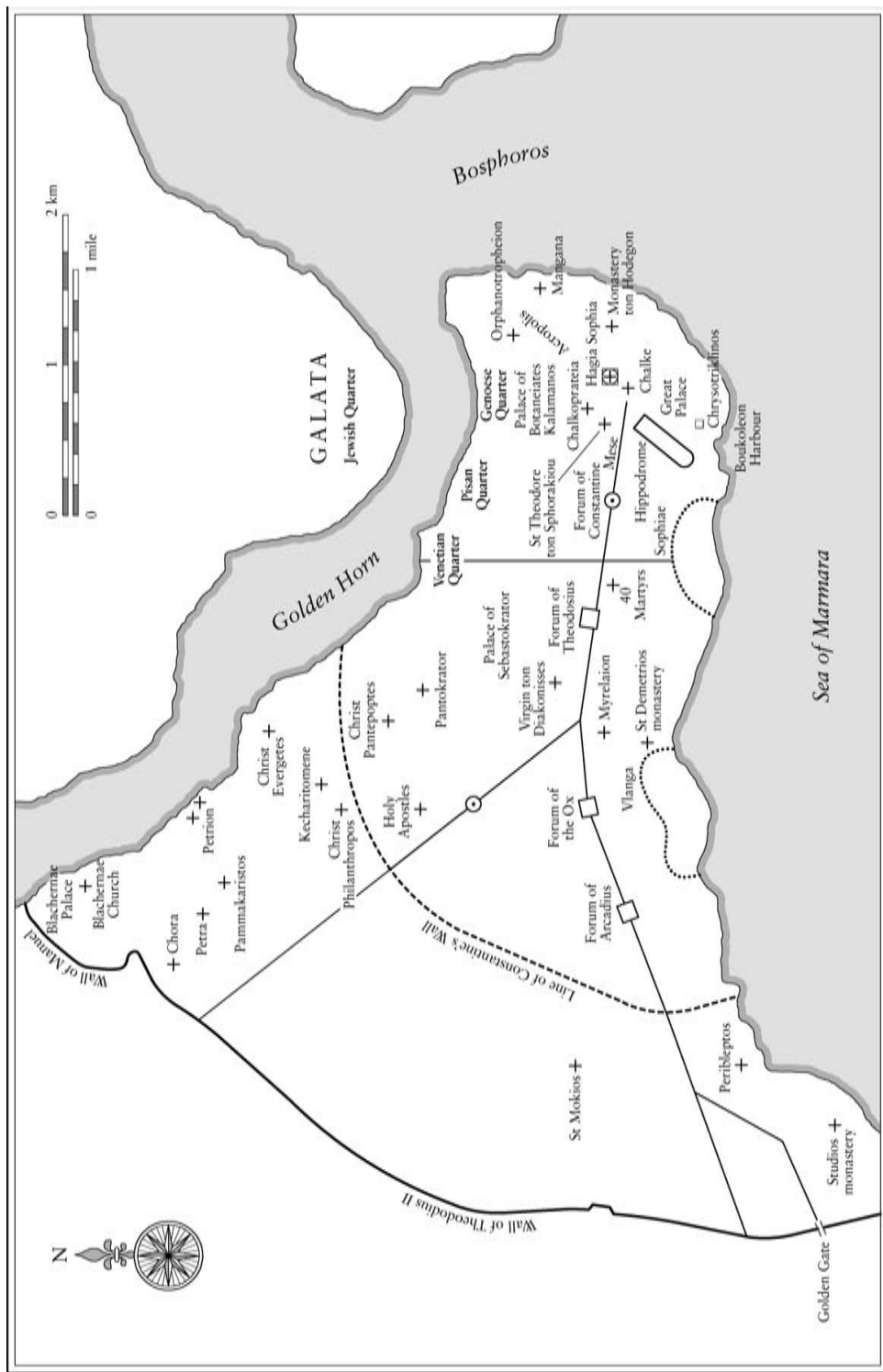
Map 1 The Byzantine World. N. Bakirtzis and D. Pitzalis.



Map 2 Thessalonika and central Macedonia. N. Bakirtzis.



Map 3 Plan of the fortified enclosure of Thessalonika. N. Bakirtzis.



Map 4 Plan of Byzantine Constantinople, redrawn by R. Ousterhout from Magdalino 1993.

PART I

THE BYZANTINES IN THEIR WORLD

As Michael Angold reminds us at the beginning of his essay on political process, Byzantium was a “historical bureaucratic polity,” where power was concentrated in the hands of the ruler, the emperor. Consequently, “political process was very largely a matter of maintaining the equilibrium of the system in the face of all kinds of challenges, both external and internal.” Angold takes as a point of departure Gilbert Dagron’s important study of the imperial office, and the relationship of the emperor and patriarch in Constantinople. Placing the city at the centre of the equation, Angold supplements Dagron’s “mental” approach to power, with an analysis of political processes in the seventh and eighth centuries. He explores the shifting balance of powers between the circus factions, the famous Blues and Greens; the senate, the exact role of which is still not fully understood in Byzantium; the army, which could never be ignored; and most importantly, in Angold’s estimation, the patriarch. Angold identifies “a determination that imperial authority was not only founded in, but also responsible to Constantinople,” and posits the centrality of the cult of the Mother of God, who afforded protection to the city, the New Jerusalem.

Angold’s observations would be applicable also to the later periods, as he himself notes. Paul Stephenson expands upon this in a chapter devoted once more to balancing the interests of groups within the political process at a time of rapid economic and demographic expansion, from before 900 until the sack of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade. Stephenson suggests that the imperial government, based in Constantinople, failed to develop institutions which could control and exploit that growth, and that this failure was the root of Byzantium’s decline as a centralized political power. The trajectory of the state’s decline is traced in two areas: the loss of state control of gold, the medium for taxation and payments to holders of public office; and the growth of an aristocracy, which was increasingly self-aware and cohesive, and possessed of interests opposed to those of the state. Aristocrats charged with serving the interests of the state competed with it for control of resources. Their aim was to exploit the system as far as possible without undermining it: effectively, to steal as many golden eggs as possible without killing the goose. But the goose died.

Known in contemporary legislation as the “powerful,” middle Byzantine aristocrats placed private concerns above those of the state, even as they held public office.

They acquired resources which hitherto had accrued to the state – largely in the form of taxes and levies on land – and of rights which had hitherto been the preserve of the state – again, principally concerned with taxation of landed interests, but also therefore over those who worked the land. This led to political fragmentation and the emergence of new socio-economic hierarchies. During the tenth and eleventh centuries policies were devised which aimed to bolster existing political and fiscal structures, prop up the state economy and delimit the power of aristocrats. According to Stephenson, these measures failed. Twelfth-century efforts to harness the interests and wealth of the aristocracy, anchored in the land, to those of the state similarly provided no lasting solution, but instead led to greater political fragmentation, internecine conflict, social unrest and ultimately to the collapse of the state system in the last years of the twelfth century.

In chapter 3, Cécile Morrisson is concerned also with coins and money in the Byzantine economy, but offers not a political interpretation, but rather a masterful survey of fiscal and monetary history. The key developments in coins and coinage, imperial minting and finances, and the role of money in the economy through ten centuries are all set out so clearly and concisely as to defy further summary. Each development is tied firmly into its context, with full references to pertinent written sources, critical commentary and cross-references. For example, the process by which the gold and silver coinage was debased during the eleventh century, and the Komnenian currency reform, which are both central to Chapter 2, are discussed fully. Similarly, one can make far better sense of John Haldon's chapter, on military logistics and resource-management, having read Morrisson.

Haldon's claim is that "the East Roman empire up to the twelfth century was well served by an efficient – indeed, ruthless – fiscal and logistical system which maximized the often limited resources at the state's disposal." Beginning with a review of the structure and organization of the empire's armed forces, Haldon traces the changes that attended the shift from a defensive posture in the seventh century to a more aggressive and expansive posture in the tenth. New cavalry and infantry formations followed practices outlined in tactical manuals, discussed later in the volume by Denis Sullivan, and depended upon fine leadership, effective strategy and the efficient delivery of supplies. Until the seventh century, mounts and pack animals were provided by levy and imperial studfarms, and arms and armour were manufactured in state armouries. These were bought by soldiers with a stipend provided for that purpose. This appears to have been sustained, at least in part, into the tenth century, when warehouses, storehouses and workshops in Constantinople supplied an expedition in 949. The process for supplying wood, iron ore and, most importantly, provisions was always more decentralized: food was acquired principally from the locales by a process of compulsory purchase, and this would feed the mounts and pack animals as well as the soldiers. "The late tenth-century treatise on campaign organization stipulates a basic supply of twenty-four days' rations of barley for the horses, which according to other sources was similarly to be put aside by the thematic *protonotarios* for collection by the army en route." Generals were advised to carry sufficient provisions so as not to become a burden on local producers, but they frequently failed to do so, and the passage of an expeditionary force, which might involve compulsory billeting, was rarely welcomed. This problem was exacerbated with the rise, in the eleventh century, in the use of mercenary forces.

The four chapters that follow, by Anthony Kaldellis, Leonora Neville, Shaun Tougher and Günter Prinzing, lead us away from processes, practicalities and institutions to people. But all confront the same issue: the impossibility of knowing the Byzantines. Women and children, men and eunuchs, slaves and freedmen, are all presented to us through the variously “distorting mirror” of literature, and we get closest to those who are least representative of Byzantine society. As Kaldellis expresses it, succinctly, “we do not know the lives of past women and children [men, eunuchs, slaves, etc.], only the texts in which they are represented. But we should not mistake the modes of representation with those of life.” Still, one need not take the hardest “Linguistic Turn,” and it may be possible to know something more about Byzantine women and children than a particular textual strategy of representation. In pursuit of that end, Kaldellis explores some “vanishing ladies” long dear to social historians: Danielis, Theodote and Styliane (mother and daughter of Michael Psellos), but also turns to hagiography and miracle collections in search of *realia* rather than “authentic voices.” The devotion of sons to their mothers appears to offer a rich new vein that Kaldellis has begun to tap.

Leonora Neville focuses on the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but employs insights from a close reading of Prokopios. In doing so, she emulates those whose histories she explores: Michael Psellos and Nikephoros Bryennios, in whose works there is “an odd repetition of a dramatic scene involving a speech by a woman.” The issue she highlights is the inversion of gender roles, and the criticism of powerful men that is implied thereby. Men at their weakest moments – declining high office – appear to be manly by ignoring the irrational pleading, exceptionally presented in direct speech, by women, but of course as written by men. Shaun Tougher, on the other hand, in Chapter 7, shows us men not through the eyes of women as written by men, but instead from a “eunuch perspective.” That is not to offer the views of eunuchs on men, for we have few writers known to have been eunuchs, but rather how eunuchs allow us to consider masculinity and key features of the identity of the Byzantine man: body, career and family. Eunuchs, like children and angels, cannot grow beards, and the possession of a hairy chin was *de rigueur* for Byzantine men from the seventh century. Beards, as Tougher shows, are good to think with. Eunuchs also had more diverse career opportunities than is frequently imagined; more indeed, at court and beyond, than the “bearded.” While there were jobs that only a eunuch could undertake, eunuchs might also serve in “manlier” roles, notably as generals, although certain senior military titles were formally denied them (*domestikos*), as were the roles of Eparch of the City and the rank of quaestor. Still, Tougher provides lists of exceptions. In career terms, the only absolute prohibition that was always enforced may have been that on a eunuch becoming emperor. On a more mundane level, no eunuch was permitted to marry, for the purpose of that institution was defined as procreation. Many men – notably, but not exclusively, monks – chose not to marry, and infamously that included an emperor, Basil II.

“Like other men, eunuchs were alert to the value of creating such social bonds,” and so they participated in rituals that created bonds of kinship, such as godparenthood or brotherhood. Indeed, eunuchs tended to come from well-connected families, and so perhaps they are least likely to have been within the most elusive social group in Byzantium: slaves. Günter Prinzing, in Chapter 8, assesses the complications in tracing slaves and slavery in the Byzantine World, but more importantly offers a

summary of the “state of research.” This *Forschungsstand* may serve as a window into an area of Byzantine society that was neglected by contemporary historians and chroniclers, where it is frequently obscured by ambiguous language and terminology, but is far more apparent to those familiar with legal texts, manuals and wills. A Byzantine slave cost between 20 and 100 gold coins, and hence was a major investment. Manumission, the freeing of a slave, was considered an act of charity and was encouraged by the Church, but it made little financial sense unless the slave to be freed had provided children born into slavery, and their unions were not legally marriages until the last years of the eleventh century. Freed slaves rarely achieved acceptance outside their own kind (the case of Samonas is exceptional, and Prinzing relates it), but those who could afford to do so also owned slaves. In order to elucidate further the issues, Prinzing explores a number of excerpts from key texts and their interpretation in secondary literature: Nikephoros’ *Short History*, Kedrenos via Ostrogorsky, Theophanes Continuatus (*Vita Basilii*) and seven passages from Skylitzes (paying special attention also to the *PmbZ*).

The last two chapters in Part I, by Christopher Livanos and Tia Kolbaba, look at belief and Orthodoxy. They do so largely from the outside, exploring the views of those who challenged Orthodoxy from within and without the Byzantine World. In a wide-ranging, impressionistic and concise essay, Livanos introduces the notion of Orthodoxy through consideration of a perceived opposite, “paganism.” As Livanos explains, no Byzantine would ever have called himself a pagan, and no exact equivalent to the modern term, derived from the Latin *paganus*, existed in medieval Greek. Instead, the term “Hellene” was used, at least until the eleventh century, in a pejorative sense. But from the twelfth century those who had used it of others who were not Orthodox claimed it for the Orthodox Greeks, who contrasted themselves with others advancing claims for Roman primacy, the Latins; and still later one finds efforts towards a revival of Hellenism as pagan monotheism, by Plethon.

Where Livanos dwells interestedly on Zoroastrians and Bogomils, and on such texts as the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Tia Kolbaba turns directly to the matter of the Latins and the theological texts they employed in disputation with the Greeks. Kolbaba presents a considered and detailed narrative of relations between Greek and Latin Churches, touching briefly upon the ninth-century “Photian” schism, but dwelling upon the matter of azymes, that arose in the eleventh century, specifically with regard to practices in the Armenian Church, which concerns were transferred to the Latins, in the first instance to the community of Amalfitan merchants resident in Constantinople, and in the second to those communities of Orthodox Christians living in southern Italy who had come under the sway of the Normans. This region receives much important coverage, as does the controversy to which the dispute over unleavened bread led, for it escalated through political and diplomatic grandstanding and ill temper, and has come to be known as the “Great Schism.” Kolbaba takes the opposite line, that it was not even a schism, but “a quarrel between the legates and the patriarch, leading to excommunications and recriminations which neither side applied to all members of the other side and both sides were willing to forget rather soon thereafter.” The quarrel was, however, remarkably instructive for views which hardened in the long twelfth century (1081–1204), the age of Crusades, but also of a reforming papacy and of intellectual ferment in the West, which forms the last part of Kolbaba’s chapter.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BYZANTINE POLITICAL PROCESS AT CRISIS POINT



Michael Angold

I

Byzantine politics have had a bad press since at least the eighteenth century. They have become and remain a byword for corruption, duplicity, secrecy and stealth. Byzantinists still feel that they have to defend Byzantium against a modern stereotype, which presents Byzantium as a “tyrannical government by effeminate, cowardly men and corrupt eunuchs, obsessed with hollow rituals and endless, complex and incomprehensible bureaucracy.”¹ In fact, Byzantium was fairly typical of what social scientists label “Historical Bureaucratic Polities,” which were a dominant force on the world stage from antiquity to the eighteenth century.² They are characterized by a concentration of power in the hands of the ruler. This receives validation, in the first place, from a religious authority, which in general terms establishes the ruler’s obligations to society at large: the protection of religion, the giving of justice and the maintenance of order. To carry these out effectively the ruler needed trained administrators, who staffed a bureaucratic system of government. The political process was very largely a matter of maintaining the equilibrium of the system in the face of all kinds of challenges, both external and internal, of which social and economic change may have been the most corrosive.

How this was achieved varied, but in normal circumstances it is difficult to follow because it was a largely subterranean process conducted behind closed doors, whence the charges of corruption levelled at this type of polity. There was nothing exceptional about the levels of corruption at Byzantium. Corruption was an intrinsic part of the system: it helped to oil the wheels of government. What was exceptional was the continuity and stability of Byzantine government, which allowed the system to function relatively smoothly despite revolts and palace coups. This was because the consensus around the imperial office, if not individual emperors, remained in place. Contributing to this was the one truly exceptional feature of Byzantine political life: the preponderating role of the city of Constantinople. In a famous article Paul Alexander established the proposition that in Byzantium capital and empire were one and the same. The frontiers of the empire might vary, but, as long as Constantinople stood, so did the empire. The political process was effectively

concentrated in Constantinople;³ so much so that until the final period of Byzantine history after 1204 no attempt was made to create rival imperial centres, unless you count the Bulgarian empire in the tenth century. Nor in the provinces were there demands for separatism until the late twelfth century at the earliest.⁴ This might suggest that Constantinople exercised iron control over the provinces, but this seems to have been far from the case. As Leonora Neville has observed, “the imperial administration appears both apathetic in regard to regulating provincial society and determined in regard to maintaining a monopoly on sovereignty in Constantinople.”⁵ This meant preserving the territorial integrity of the empire in the face of external or internal threats, on the one hand, and gathering in taxation, on the other. From the seventh century there evolved a loose system of provincial administration, which normally goes by the name of the theme system. The themes were originally a series of military commands, designed to defend Anatolia against Islam, but these soon became a system of provincial government.⁶ The military commander or *strategos* enjoyed vice-regal powers over his territories, but he owed his appointment along with a substantial salary to the emperor. Among his responsibilities was ensuring that his theme sent back its taxes to Constantinople. Taxation was always a cause of friction and lay behind several provincial revolts.⁷ But the leaders of provincial society were well aware that status and the rewards that went with it were carefully controlled from Constantinople. Their rebellions were as often as not so many cries for attention from a distant ruler. On the very few occasions when rebellion aimed at regime change, the outcome depended very largely on Constantinople, which monopolized the legitimization of power.

Constantinople was the New Rome. It was the Queen of Cities. It was through its representatives that imperial status, which derived from the Christian God, was mediated. Since, in practice, succession to the Byzantine throne was dynastic, more often than not it was a matter of following a conventional ceremonial, which included acclamation and coronation.⁸ However, when the succession was in doubt, the imperial office was effectively in the gift of elements representing the city of Constantinople. This allowed those groups which had a ceremonial role in the making of an emperor to act as a conduit for the tensions and rivalries within Byzantine society. These were the senate and people of Constantinople and, to a lesser extent, the army, which in their different ways had a role to play in the acclamation of an emperor, but more important than any of these in the inauguration of an emperor was the patriarch of Constantinople, who acquired responsibility for crowning the emperor, which from the mid-seventh century almost always took place in the church of St Sophia. As part of this ceremony the new emperor might have to provide the patriarch with an Orthodox profession of faith. The implication was that the patriarch had a duty of spiritual and moral supervision of the emperor's conduct of office. But the emperor, for his part, had a responsibility before God to protect the Church. This, in practice, meant that imperial and priestly spheres of authority were hopelessly entangled. Justinian's famous preamble to Novel VI tried to provide a solution. It recognized that under a Christian dispensation there are two different kinds of authority, both of which have divine sanction: imperial and priestly. Ideally they functioned in harmony and offered mutual support; in practice, it was a matter of trial and error, but a spirit of compromise normally reigned. When, for whatever reason, this broke down, it was often the start of a political crisis, in which the

patriarch might find it necessary to take the initiative. It emphasized that at Byzantium there were two poles of authority.

Increasingly the people of Constantinople looked to the patriarch for a lead. The growing influence of the patriarch was apparent from the way the focus of popular agitation shifted in the course of the seventh century from the hippodrome to the forecourt of the church of St Sophia. This anticipated the eclipse of the circus factions as a political factor in the course of the eighth century. Popular participation in the political process was thereafter marginal. It still remained dangerous to antagonize the populace of Constantinople, but it responded more readily to moral issues than it did to pure self-interest, whence its readiness to turn to the patriarch.

The patriarch could usually count on support from within the Constantinopolitan elite, which until the twelfth century was a dominant political force at Byzantium. That elite was inseparable from a bureaucratic system of government, which provided justice, raised taxes, and supervised the organization of the army and navy.⁹

Administration was based on written records, often of a relatively sophisticated nature. We are not talking in modern terms, but Byzantine government was on a par with seventeenth-century European or Ottoman administrative practice. It meant that there was a need for expert administrators. This in turn required a solid education, which can be roughly equated with the course known as *grammatike*, which was a secondary education based on a mastery of classical Greek literature. Education of this kind was not only expensive, but it was difficult to find outside Constantinople. The schoolmaster was an influential figure. His success lay in placing his pupils in the administration, which he was able to do through the contacts he had built up.

Entry into the administration was the easier for having relatives already in place. The core of the Constantinopolitan elite was made up of long-established families. This was just as much the case in the seventh and eighth centuries, when the system of naming makes it difficult to establish family connections, as it was from the tenth century when surnames started to become common.¹⁰ These same families also supplied the patriarchal church with its officers.¹¹ But recruitment into the civil service and the patriarchal church was not limited to a handful of families. Because the rewards both in monetary terms and in status were so great there was constant pressure from outsiders. Families that succeeded, for example, in trade liked to secure their position in society by putting their children into government one way or another. Education was one path. Another was through the purchase of a dignity. Though a feature of early modern political structures, the purchase of honours was scarcely to be found in a medieval context, outside Byzantium. This just shows how money permeated the Byzantine political system. The purchase of an honour at the Byzantine court was largely a matter of social prestige, but it was also an investment, since an honour brought a financial return in the shape of an annual honorarium or *roga*. How monetized things had become is evident from the way in which it was possible to buy an honour at an augmented rate, which brought a proportionally higher annuity.¹² The holding of honours defined the political elite in its largest sense at Byzantium. Because of the sale of honours it was rather larger than those who took a direct part in government.

Did they have any sense of collective identity? The strongest impression is that the elite consisted of a series of competing cliques. It might be thought that any sense of a

collective identity derived from imperial service and was celebrated in the ceremonial of the imperial court. But that is not quite the end of the matter, because of the continued existence of the senate (*synkletos* or *gerousia*), which on occasion had an independent political role. Modern historians have had little success in establishing either its membership or its day-to-day functions.¹³ For Byzantines it seems to have been less of a problem. They knew the appropriate occasions, which called for its intervention, and who had a right to senatorial status. In his brief autobiography the historian Michael Attaleiates – a relatively important official in the later eleventh century – took pride in his membership of the senate. He held the high rank of *proedros*.¹⁴ There can be little doubt that senatorial status went with high rank at the imperial court. This has suggested that only in exceptional circumstances did the senate have an existence independent of the imperial court. But can this really have been the case, for why otherwise would there have been not one but two imposing senate houses in Constantinople and of such importance that they were rebuilt on a number of occasions?¹⁵ It may simply be that the ceremonial connected with these buildings was never codified, because in normal circumstances the role of the senate was honorific. They are most unlikely to have been the scene of debate, because at least on the surface the Byzantine political process was dominated by slogans and acclamations. The senate and its traditions were precious, because they were a relic of the Roman past, which was difficult to jettison because of Constantinople's claim to be the New Rome. It may seem like sheer nostalgia, but it imparted shared values to an elite of office-holders. They saw themselves as the upholders of the best traditions; as the guardians both of a Roman past and increasingly of Orthodoxy. Collectively they acted as a political conscience. They shaped the imperial ideal, but their abiding loyalty was to Constantinople.¹⁶ They were the arbiters of the political process, by virtue of the fact that their collective memory preserved the necessary precedents and dictated protocol. As far as they were concerned, the emperor presided over a system, which they ran.

The emperor, for his part, was well aware that without their cooperation the wheels of government would grind to a halt. But the last thing that most emperors wanted was to be a prisoner of the system. They had to be able to assert their authority. This they did through the imperial household, which was largely staffed until the twelfth century by eunuchs. The latter acted in the first instance as intermediaries between the emperor and the administration. The power and influence enjoyed by eunuchs derived from the trust of the emperor. From their ranks were drawn more often than not the emperor's chief ministers. These often appear in the pages of chronicles as sinister figures. Their origins were diverse. Though there were laws against castrating Byzantines, many were of Byzantine origin, but others came from beyond the frontiers of the empire.¹⁷ What bound them together was entry usually in their teens into palace service, which provided them with an effective training. It also inculcated devotion to the emperor, which does not mean that they had no sense of family commitments. John the Orphanotrophos is a case in point. He came from a family of Paphlagonian moneychangers. He used the power he gained as a confidant first of Basil II and then of Romanos III Argyros as a way of promoting his family fortunes.¹⁸

The political process at Byzantium depended on a triangular relationship, in which the most important elements were the emperor and his household, the Con-

stantinopolitan elite and the patriarchal church. The populace of Constantinople and the army also had roles to play, but rarely did they act independently, and in the case of the populace of the capital its direct participation declined markedly from the eighth century. Since this relationship was always fluid, it is surprising that government at Byzantium was as stable as it was, but perhaps not so much of a surprise, because all parties had a vested interest in maintaining the system of government, which provided their members with status and salaries. Their common purpose received affirmation in the elaborate ceremonial, which celebrated their adhesion to the ideal of a Christian empire. This was given verbal form in the speeches, which were a feature of Byzantine court life.¹⁹ These might occasionally be critical of imperial policies, but never was the institution of the monarchy called in question. It was the lynchpin without which the system would simply collapse.

Gilbert Dagron has recently explored aspects of one side of this triangular relationship in his brilliant study of what used to be called “caesaropapism.” It contains much that is of general value for the political process at Byzantium, but it is concerned with a specific problem: the sacrality of the imperial office and its implications for the acquisition and exercise of imperial authority. This leads Dagron to concentrate on the succession, the coronation and, most important of all, the ceremonial procession, which periodically brought the emperor into the heart of the patriarchal church and helped to regulate imperial relations with the patriarch.²⁰ Therein lies another of Dagron’s major themes: the emergence of the patriarchate as a counter-power.²¹ The result is a study that is far more interested in mental rather than political processes. My purpose will be the exact opposite. It will also assume that important as the question of the sacrality of the imperial office is to the Byzantine political process it has to be examined in the context of society as a whole. In order to reduce so massive an undertaking to manageable proportions, I intend to examine the political process at Byzantium at a particular juncture, which Dagron has singled out as of particular importance. This occurred in the early eighth century, which he sees as a watershed between the Christian Roman empire created by Constantine and Byzantium proper.²² This was the work of the “iconoclast” emperors Leo III and his son Constantine V, who did much to sacralize the imperial office through their use of Old Testament analogies, but this had far-reaching implications for the political process, because, as Dagron concludes: “In Byzantium, the Old Testament had a constitutional value; it had the same normative role in the political sphere as the New Testament in the moral sphere.”²³ I have deliberately chosen an episode which illustrates both the collapse and the recovery of the political process, because, when it was functioning properly, it left relatively little trace in the historical record. Only in times of crisis are its workings more clearly revealed. We see the efforts being made to restore consensus around the imperial office.

II

The major achievement of Leo III (717–41) was to rescue the imperial office from a profound crisis. When he ascended the Byzantine throne in 717, he was the fifth emperor in little more than ten years. It would seem that the rapid turnover of emperors reflected terminal decline, because at the same time the Arabs were closing in on Constantinople and the empire appeared to be on the point of collapse. Leo III’s

successful defence of Constantinople against the Arabs broke into this downward spiral and he and his son Constantine V were able to rebuild the Byzantine empire on a more stable basis.

Underlying the crisis was the struggle with Islam, which put immense pressures on the fabric of government. Byzantium adapted as best it could. The standing armies were quartered in the provinces of Anatolia, as a means of providing local defence. This would evolve into a system of military administration, which goes by the name of the theme system.²⁴ By the end of the seventh century these armies periodically undermined the political stability of the Byzantine empire as they sought to place their candidates on the throne of Constantinople. This coincided with a financial crisis, which came to a head in the first reign of Justinian II (685–95). The fiscal system inherited from the late Roman empire was no longer viable.²⁵ It had established the budget centrally with each fiscal unit providing its proportionate share, which could vary considerably from year to year. It was a system that required relatively stable conditions, which was hardly the case in the seventh century. Around the turn of the seventh century there are signs that a new fiscal system was evolving, where each unit of taxation, normally a peasant household, was expected to provide a fixed sum. At first, this must have meant declining revenues and an inability on the part of central government to meet expenditure.²⁶ Byzantine fiscal administration therefore became increasingly erratic and its demands seem to have fallen disproportionately on the citizens of Constantinople. While the empire's tax base was diminishing, its expenditure can scarcely have decreased. Its strategy in the face of Islam was to become a naval power. It was the only practical way of holding together territories that still stretched from the western Mediterranean to the Black Sea. Maintaining a navy is notoriously expensive. In the crucial period at the turn of the seventh century there were two large expeditions to Carthage and at least two to Kherson in the Crimea, which gives some idea of the scale of naval activity.²⁷ Justinian II paid for the punitive expedition he sent against Kherson in 710 by an extraordinary levy divided among the different elements of Constantinople's population.²⁸

Although the roots of the crisis, which overtook the Byzantine empire in the early eighth century, can be traced back to earlier in the previous century, it only began to reveal itself during the first reign of Justinian II. This comes as something of a surprise because he seemed to be in such a strong position. His dynastic credentials were impeccable. He was the fifth generation of the house of Herakleios. He was the heir to the achievements of his father Constantine IV (668–85), who had thrown back the Arabs from the walls of Constantinople in 678 and had used the respite obtained to settle long-standing divisions within the Church, by calling an ecumenical council, which met in the imperial palace at Constantinople in 680–1. It returned the Church to a strict interpretation of the creed of Chalcedon on the basis of a formula drafted by Pope Agatho, which represented a *rapprochement* between Constantinople and Rome. But an incident in the aftermath of the council revealed the fragility of imperial authority. The theme of the Anatolics marched to Chrysopolis on the Asiatic shore opposite Constantinople. They demanded that Constantine IV should reinstate his two brothers, who had recently been excluded from a share in the imperial dignity. The patrician Theodore of Koloneia went out to negotiate. He had been one of those instrumental in ensuring that Constantine IV and his brothers

remained in Constantinople when their father moved his centre of operations to Syracuse. On the present occasion he persuaded the leaders of the Anatolics to enter Constantinople on the understanding that the senate would carry out their wishes. He was, in other words, bypassing the emperor. Constantine IV quite understandably treated this as a challenge to his authority, which called for decisive action. It came in the form of having the theme officers hanged and his brothers' noses slit, to emphasize their loss of imperial status.²⁹

Constantine IV acted as he did to safeguard the succession of his young son Justinian II, who was only sixteen when his father died in 685. At first, his reign went well. By 691 he was in a position to convene another ecumenical council, the seventh, which usually goes by the name "In Troullo," after the hall within the palace complex in which it was held. Its purpose was to complement the dogmatic pronouncements of the fifth and sixth councils with a series of disciplinary canons affecting both clergy and laity. The initiative can only have come from the emperor. His intention was to restore moral direction to Church and society at a time when many thought that Byzantium was losing its way. It was a clear demonstration of imperial authority. Its condemnation of western practices, such as the celibacy of priests, and its emphasis on the status of the church of Constantinople suggest that Justinian II aimed at imposing conformity of practice on the Christian Church, but in accordance with the conventions of the church of Constantinople. This irritated the papacy. Pope Sergius I (687–701) protested and refused to approve the canons of the council "In Troullo." Justinian II despatched an agent to arrest the pope and bring him to Constantinople to be reprimanded or worse. The Italian armies mutinied rather than hand over the pope to the imperial agent, who was left isolated, begging for papal protection.³⁰

This was a humiliation for the emperor, which coincided with his growing unpopularity in Constantinople caused by harsh fiscal policies. Justinian tried to placate Constantinopolitan opinion in traditional fashion by acting as a patron of the circus factions. He even – in the face of patriarchal disapproval – pulled down a church near the palace so that he could erect a fountain house to serve as a reception hall for the Blue faction. This failed to allay growing discontent. We are told that the emperor then ordered the massacre of the populace of Constantinople, beginning with the patriarch Kallinikos (694–706), whom the emperor had singled out as an enemy. We have no reasons for supposing that the patriarch was involved in the opening stages of the coup being organized against Justinian II around Leontios, a former governor of the Anatolic theme, but it is absolutely clear that without his endorsement it would not have succeeded as easily as it did. The coup was launched with the cry, "All you Christians, go to St Sophia." The conspirators, reinforced by prisoners released from the Praetorium and by the circus factions, assembled in the atrium of St Sophia, where they received the blessing of the patriarch. He intoned the words: "This is the day that the Lord has made," to which the assembled populace responded with shouts of "Dig up the bones of the emperor," the traditional formula for defying a reigning emperor.³¹ They then made their way to the hippodrome, where the Blues acclaimed Leontios emperor. Justinian II and his ministers were brought before the people in the hippodrome. The ministers were seized and dragged along the Mese to the Forum of the Ox, where they were burnt to death. Leontios spared Justinian II's life, but cut off his nose and exiled him to Kherson, from which

he would later escape.³² After a series of adventures he managed with Bulgarian help to recover the throne of Constantinople in 705 and exact his vengeance.

The overthrow of Justinian II in 695 was a Constantinopolitan affair, but in the background were the armies of the themes. Why else would the conspirators have looked to a former *strategos* of the Anatolics to lead their coup? These commanders had become natural political leaders. It was at this juncture that the themes became a significant but not decisive political factor. They were involved in some but not all of the frequent changes of emperor of the time. Leontios may have been overthrown in 698 by a revolt engineered within the naval command of the Kibyrraiotai, but Justinian II's return to power in 705 had nothing to do with support from the themes, nor did his overthrow in 711 by Philippikos Bardanes. The latter was toppled two years later by detachments of the Opsikion theme, but on this occasion they were operating in conjunction with elements of the Constantinopolitan elite, who ensured the succession of one of their number, who took the name of Anastasios. In 715 the Opsikion theme was back and this time was able to impose its own candidate on the throne of Constantinople. The latter was in his turn ousted by Leo the Isaurian, then *strategos* of the Anatolics, who had remained loyal to Anastasios, the previous emperor.³³

The armies of the themes were among the most powerful forces involved in the Byzantine political process at the turn of the seventh century, but they needed support within Constantinople; above all they needed the approval of the patriarch. Ever since 626, when – in the absence of the emperor Herakleios – the patriarch Sergios I (610–38) organized the defence of Constantinople against the Avars and the Persians, the patriarch had come to be identified with the welfare and security of the capital. His position was enhanced by the central role he played in the cult of the Mother of God,³⁴ which increasingly unified all elements of Constantinopolitan society.

There was one exception to this rule. The circus factions still retained their independence and constituted a powerful element within the society of the capital. They came to the fore at times of political uncertainty because of the constitutional role they had assumed in the making and unmaking of emperors. It is clear enough that they gave direction to the anger of the populace. But very little is known in detail about their involvement in the politics of the time. For example, Philippikos Bardanes was overthrown after celebrating the foundation of the city with races in the hippodrome won by the Greens and was subsequently blinded in the *ornatorion* – a kind of club-house – of the Greens.³⁵ This suggests, though never stated directly, the involvement of the circus factions in the emperor's overthrow.³⁶ We do not know for sure whether the circus factions continued to supply Constantinople with a militia, as they had done in the early seventh century, but it seems probable. All we do know is that the hippodrome retained its importance as a political arena, where the emperor could present himself directly to the people of the capital. It was here that Justinian II celebrated his triumph over his enemies after his return to power in 705.³⁷

Among his victims was the patriarch Kallinikos, who was blinded and exiled to Rome. Before becoming patriarch he had served as treasurer (*skeuophylax*) of the church of the Blachernai, which preserved some of the most important relics of the Mother of God and had developed into a centre of her cult.³⁸ He belonged, in other words, to the clerical elite, which was attached to the patriarchal church and other

major shrines of Constantinople, but nothing further is known of his background, which brings us to the enigma of the Constantinopolitan elite at this juncture.³⁹ We have plenty of names but a nomenclature reduced in the majority of cases to a single Christian name means that a detailed analysis of the Constantinopolitan elite is out of the question. It was quite normal in the texts of the time to describe the members of this elite as senators. Equally, there are references to the senate of Constantinople, which assembled for formal occasions. As with the circus factions there is a reluctance to provide much in the way of concrete detail, which probably means that their importance was largely unofficial, but their survival also reflects a sense of social ascendancy, kept alive by a handful of ancient families who preserved a distinct identity.⁴⁰ The best example is the future patriarch Germanos. He was the son of the patrician Justinian, who was executed at the beginning of Constantine IV's reign, almost certainly, as Ernst Stein pointed out many years ago, because descent from the family of Justinian I made him a dynastic threat. At the same time, Germanos was castrated, again to counter any ambitions he might have had on the imperial throne.⁴¹ He went into the clergy of St Sophia. Gravitating around such families were "new men," such as the future emperor Philippikos Bardanes, the son of a successful Armenian general, who had attained patrician rank. The title of patrician was still a signal honour. It marked out those with real power. From the mid-seventh century an increasing proportion of those holding this rank were outsiders, who owed their elevation to imperial favour rather than social prominence.⁴²

It is worth looking more closely at the overthrow of Philippikos Bardanes, if only because, quite unusually, it was recorded in a contemporary account.⁴³ Bardanes' most notable action was to convene a council of the church of Constantinople – the so-called "Monothelite" council – which reversed the decision of the 680–1 council and returned to a "Monothelite" interpretation of the creed of Chalcedon. He appears to have had the support of the patriarch John VI (712–15) and of the future patriarch Germanos. He also had the support of members of the patriarchal church and a number of senators. In a scenario reminiscent of the events that followed the council "In Troullo," Pope Constantine I (708–15) refused to recognize either the council or the emperor and rebuffed an imperial agent sent to impose the emperor's will.⁴⁴ This setback seems to have had repercussions in Constantinople. Elements around the patrician Theodore Myakios conspired with officers from the Opsikion theme in the overthrow of Philippikos Bardanes, but the choice of a new emperor was an entirely Constantinopolitan affair. The new emperor was the *protoasekretis* Anthemios. His post put him at the head of the imperial chancery. His place among the old Constantinopolitan elite receives confirmation from his *praenomen* of Flavius, which under Justinian I was widely adopted by the great figures of the time. The populace assembled at the church of St Sophia and raised Anthemios to the imperial dignity. After making a suitably humiliating apology to Pope Constantine I, Patriarch John VI proceeded to crown the new emperor, who took the name Anastasios.⁴⁵ This was not the end of the matter. The emperor Anastasios' elevation then received formal approval through the vote and scrutiny of the senate, the whole of the clergy, the soldiers stationed in the capital and the "political" people, by which the circus factions are most likely meant.⁴⁶ This episode illustrates how conscious all sections of Constantinopolitan society were of their constitutional role in the making and unmaking of emperors, and not just of emperors. In 715 Germanos, then bishop of

Kyzikos, succeeded to the patriarchal throne. Since the Orthodox Church is reluctant to countenance the translation of an incumbent from one see to another, this was an extraordinary appointment, best explained by popular sentiment. The chronicler Theophanes has preserved the text of the decree approving this transfer: "By the ballot and scrutiny of the most God-fearing priests and deacons, of all the pious clergy, of the sacred senate, and of the Christ-loving people of this God-guarded and Imperial City, God's grace . . . hereby transfers Germanos, the most holy bishop of the metropolis of Kyzikos to become bishop of this God-guarded and Imperial City."⁴⁷ It is interesting to find associated with the clergy of the capital both the senate and the people of Constantinople, but not a word about the emperor, because translations were normally effected by an act of the patriarchal synod with imperial approval or by an imperial decree. The role of the senate, people and clergy of Constantinople in the making of both an emperor and a patriarch at this time cannot just be accidental. It represented a conviction that imperial and patriarchal status inhered in the city of Constantinople and its representatives had a right to confer these as they saw fit. It looks very much like a version of the Augustan settlement, but tailored to the "New Rome."

It represented a determination that imperial authority was not only founded in, but also responsible to Constantinople. Forming a background to this were memories of imperial attempts to abandon Constantinople, unsuccessful in the case of Herakleios; successful in the case of his grandson Constans, who in 662 left Constantinople with the intention of making Rome his capital. This raised the spectre of Constantinople consigned to political limbo. So awful a prospect was this that the citizens of Constantinople refused to allow Constans' consort and their three sons to depart from Constantinople to join him in the West.⁴⁸ Given the circumstances of his reign, which were dominated by the long Arab siege of Constantinople, it is not surprising that Constantine IV (668–85) preserved an accord with his capital. But it was different for Justinian II. His father's successes offered him far greater freedom of action, which he used to assert imperial supremacy. This was increasingly seen in Constantinople as tyranny. His style of rule was evident not so much from the buildings he added to the imperial palace, but from his decision to fortify it. He relied very heavily on the eunuch Stephen the Persian, notorious for the way he had the emperor's mother beaten.⁴⁹ With his help he imposed oppressive new taxes on the population of Constantinople. Underlying Justinian II's high-handed style of government was an attempt to restate the nature of imperial authority, which he did in the first instance through the creation of a new iconography for his gold coinage. The emperor's portrait was now on the reverse, while on the obverse was an image of Christ with the legend *Rex regnantium*. It made clear that the emperor was the servant of Christ.⁵⁰ It was a way of emancipating the imperial office from any dependence on Constantinople. His use of a general council of the Church as a vehicle of imperial authority pointed in the same direction. If the enactments of the council "In Troullo" were most obviously directed against Rome, this would not necessarily have been welcomed in Constantinople, because there was considerable sympathy for the papacy. The influence of Rome on Constantinople was evident at the time of the 680–1 council. Attesting the confirmation of its acts sent by Justinian II to Pope Sergius in 687 were officers of the "Italian Army" (*Exercitus Italiae*), then present in Constantinople. There is no way of knowing whether they were still there at the time

of Justinian II's downfall in 695, but Italians, with citizens of Ravenna to the fore, are singled out for the part they played in his overthrow.⁵¹ In the aftermath of the removal from office of Philippikos Bardanes in 713, the papacy received, as we know, a grovelling apology from the patriarch John for his participation in the so-called "Monothelete" council organized by Philippikos.⁵² The future patriarch Germanos equally took part in the council. On becoming patriarch his immediate concern was to obtain papal approval for his elevation.⁵³ Even the new emperor Flavius Anthemios' choice of Anastasios as his imperial name may have been a tribute to the two Anastasioi, who were Latin followers of Maximos the Confessor and under the emperor Constans (641–68) suffered torture and exile with their master for their opposition to Monotheletism.⁵⁴ It was during this struggle that it became clear that Rome offered an alternative to imperial autocracy: one which stressed the primacy of priestly authority. It is unlikely that this lesson was lost on the new patriarch Germanos.

Once patriarch he became the dominant political force within Constantinople. He engineered the peaceful transfer of the imperial office from Anastasios to Theodosios, who had the backing of the Opsikion theme.⁵⁵ The new emperor and the patriarch then jointly concluded a treaty with the Bulgarians, which confirms the pre-eminent role the patriarch now enjoyed in the political life of Constantinople.⁵⁶ When the emperor Theodosios found himself challenged by Leo, *strategos* of the Anatolics, Theodosios' first action was to consult the patriarch and members of the senate, who persuaded him to abdicate and provided him with pledges that his life and his sons' lives would be spared.⁵⁷ The patriarch had already obtained an assurance on oath from Leo that "as God was his surety, he would in no way disturb God's Church [by disregarding] its apostolic and divinely instituted laws."⁵⁸ Once again the patriarch was playing a decisive role in the transfer of power from one emperor to another. He commanded the loyalties of the senate and people of Constantinople in a way that the emperor at this juncture did not. There can be no doubt that it was the patriarch's support that allowed Leo III to mount the successful defence of Constantinople against the Arabs in the years 717–18. The patriarch will have helped to secure the intervention of the Bulgarians against the Arabs, which more than anything else forced them to raise the siege of Constantinople. There are even suspicions that without pressure from the patriarch acting in conjunction with the senate Leo III might have carried out the bargain he made with Maslama, the commander of the Arab forces, to become a client of the Umayyads in return for support against the emperor Theodosios.⁵⁹

Germanos organized the liturgies and processions which were an essential part of the defence of the city. Their theme was the protection afforded to Constantinople by the Mother of God. When one of the Arab commanders fell from his horse under the walls of the city popular opinion attributed this mishap to the action of an icon of the Mother of God.⁶⁰ In a sermon Germanos understood the deliverance of Constantinople to be entirely the work of the Mother of God. He said nothing of any contribution made by the emperor.⁶¹ As the orchestrator of the cult of the Mother of God much of the credit for the successful defence of Constantinople will have gone to the patriarch. At first, Leo III was happy to placate Germanos. He asked him to baptize his son Constantine, who was born soon after the departure of the Arabs from under the walls of Constantinople.⁶² Two years later Germanos blessed the

coronation of the young Constantine, which was carried out by his father.⁶³ This occurred immediately after Leo III had surmounted a serious political crisis. Some of the leading figures in Constantinople hatched a conspiracy to replace Leo III with the former emperor Anastasios, then resident at Thessalonika. They obtained military support from the Bulgarians, who marched with Anastasios on Constantinople. This was a scenario that had been played out on so many occasions in the past few years. There was an expectation of a peaceful transfer of the imperial office overseen by the patriarch. Given Germanos' connections with the former emperor, Leo III cannot have been entirely sure of the patriarch's loyalties. He acted with great ruthlessness. The leading conspirators in Constantinople were rounded up and executed. With hopes of Constantinople being betrayed from within dashed, the Bulgarians thought better of supporting the former emperor, whom they handed over to Leo III. The emperor Anastasios and other supporters were immediately executed. Their heads were then paraded through the hippodrome, where Leo III presided over the chariot races.⁶⁴ The coronation of the young Constantine, which followed soon afterwards, was an affirmation of dynastic legitimacy. Germanos' presence was a test of loyalty.

It must have been obvious to Leo III that, if he was to have any hope of asserting imperial authority fully, he had to impose himself on the Church. He instructed a succession of exarchs of Ravenna to discipline Pope Gregory II (715–31), but their efforts got nowhere in the face of local hostility. Leo III therefore confiscated the papal estates in Sicily and southern Italy and at some point transferred ecclesiastical jurisdiction over this region to the patriarchate of Constantinople.⁶⁵ But the real battle was with Patriarch Germanos. This came to centre on the question of images. This was sharpened by Leo III's insistence that the supreme symbol of Christianity was the cross with its connotations of imperial victory. His first issues show the imperial portrait on the obverse and a stepped cross on the reverse.⁶⁶ In 726 he erected or, more probably, restored a cross over the Chalke Gate, which was the main entrance to the imperial palace.⁶⁷ Emphasizing the cross in this way devalued the icons which played such an important role in the orchestration of the defence of Constantinople by the patriarch. The emperor's promotion of the cult of the cross clearly had popular appeal, both in the provinces and in Constantinople. Germanos did his best to defuse the situation, but got nowhere. This allowed the emperor to intervene in the dispute. In 730 he called an imperial *silention*. This was a meeting where emperors made their solemn pronouncements. It was held in the palace, but large numbers of the populace were in attendance. The patriarch was summoned before this assembly to set out his position on images. He refused to do this on the grounds that he could not make a written declaration of faith without an ecumenical council. He did not recognize an imperial *silention* as a fitting place for the resolution of points of dogma and reminded Leo III of the undertaking he had made before becoming emperor to respect "the apostolic laws." The event was carefully stage-managed. The patriarch was removed from office and replaced by his assistant, the *synkellos* Anastasios.⁶⁸

A key to Leo III's success was the popular support he enjoyed in Constantinople. He celebrated his victory over the ex-emperor Anastasios with races in the hippodrome, when the heads of his opponents were paraded on poles.⁶⁹ He involved the populace in government by having their representatives present at meetings of the imperial *silention*.⁷⁰ His son Constantine V also used *silentia* to mould public opin-

ion, on occasion holding them in the hippodrome rather than in the palace.⁷¹ In 767 he humiliated the deposed Patriarch Constantine by exposing him in the hippodrome to the taunts and ill-treatment of the factions, as a prelude to the ex-patriarch's execution.⁷² This represents a complete reversal of the situation at the beginning of the eighth century, when a patriarch could count on popular support. It also represents the beginning of the emasculation of the circus factions, which became part of the imperial apparatus of power and lost their autonomy.⁷³ But there can be no doubt that the success the emperors Leo III and Constantine V had in winning them over to the imperial cause played a large part in their re-establishment of imperial authority.

The renewed focus on the hippodrome coincided with an apparent decline in the popularity of the cult of the Mother of God. Certainly, it no longer had the prominence it enjoyed in the seventh century. Opponents of Constantine V claimed that along with his condemnation of the cult of relics he denied the efficacy of the intercession of the Mother of God and the saints.⁷⁴ However, the Iconoclast council of 754 specifically anathematized those who denied that the Blessed Virgin Mary was the Mother of God or were unwilling to accept the intercession of the saints.⁷⁵ In other words, Constantine V had no interest in antagonizing Constantinopolitan opinion by any direct attack on the cult of the Mother of God.

Leo III and Constantine V used the circus factions as a weapon against the Constantinopolitan elite. Following the example of Justinian II they brought their opponents dead or alive to the hippodrome for ritual humiliation.⁷⁶ Leo III used this tactic early in his reign as part of his savage repression of the rebellion of the ex-emperor Anastasios.⁷⁷ This must have alarmed the Constantinopolitan elite, but it hardly explains their total failure to back the patriarch Germanos in his confrontation with the emperor over images. How was Leo III able to isolate the patriarch from his natural supporters; even, given the willingness of the *synkellos* Anastasios,⁷⁸ to take over as patriarch, it would seem, from the clergy of St Sophia? Could it be that the patriarch's stance over images appeared to be an impediment to the restoration of consensus around the imperial office, which Leo III seemed on the point of achieving by associating the Constantinopolitan elite in his reforms? This would seem to be the lesson of the *Ekloga*, a lawbook which the emperor issued at the very end of his reign in March 741. This more than any other document reveals Leo III's ideas about his imperial responsibilities. He was responding to the need for a clear and systematic body of law. This was the most practical way in which he could minister to the people entrusted to him by God. At some point around 730 he set up a commission headed by the quaestor Niketas with the task of sifting through the mound of legal documentation which had accumulated since Justinian I's codification of the laws some two centuries earlier. It had reached a point where the law had become either very difficult or impossible to understand.⁷⁹ The creation of an effective system of justice required the reduction of this mass of legislation and rulings to manageable proportions. The emperor also provided the quaestor and his subordinates together with other judges with generous salaries in order to ensure equitable justice.⁸⁰ This was a measure that would have appealed to the Constantinopolitan elite, but more importantly it showed that financial stability was returning, at a time when the *Ekloga* provided solid foundations for regular administration. The issuing of a lawbook, which was among the most successful of medieval legal

compilations, marks out Leo III as a ruler who understood that just government was his main responsibility, but he was careful to associate the Constantinopolitan elite in the undertaking. In other words, Leo III was able to forge an understanding with the different elements of Constantinopolitan society. He was remembered with gratitude in Constantinople for the way he made good the damage done to large sections of the land-walls by a series of earthquakes which occurred towards the end of his reign; for, instead of relying on forced labour, as Justinian II had done for the extensions he made to the imperial palace,⁸¹ he funded the repairs by putting a small surcharge on the land tax raised throughout the empire.⁸² It was a sign that Leo III was not going to leave Constantinople to its own devices, but was reconnecting it to the empire at large. Leo III, followed by his son Constantine V, identified Byzantine kingship with Constantinople, rather than trying to assert its independent existence in the manner of a Justinian II.⁸³

Leo III was the emperor who restored equilibrium to the Byzantine political system. As Dagron noted, Leo III presented imperial rule in an Old Testament guise, which clearly had considerable appeal and helps to explain the popular support he received for his actions against images. It provided a simple riposte to the political powers assumed by the patriarch.⁸⁴ His adoption of an Old Testament model for the exercise of imperial authority was well chosen.⁸⁵ It emphasized Constantinople as the New Jerusalem, which provided a better basis for cooperation between the emperor and his capital than that of the New Rome. It indicated that the emperor was laying claim to a different kind of authority from that exercised by the patriarch. But most important of all, Leo III confirmed that Constantinople, its church, people and elite, remained the heart of the political process at Byzantium. In doing so he was able to restore that element of consensus on which the proper functioning of the Byzantine political process depended.

III

The political achievements of Leo III and his son Constantine V were considerable. They mended a political system that was on the verge of collapse under pressure from Islam. Imperial government found itself with little room for manoeuvre, trapped, as it was, between the new theme organization, which was emerging in the provinces, and the self-importance of Constantinople. Of these it was the second which offered the greater challenge because of its ideological implications, which included the notion that imperial status inhered in “the God-guarded City.” The capital’s assertiveness was comparatively new and developed with the emergence of a clearer sense of identity. It has to be remembered that, because of its refoundation by Constantine, Constantinople was in many ways an artificial creation and it took time for a sense of identity to develop. Until the seventh century the circus factions dominated the social life of Constantinople. This was hardly conducive to the crystallization of a civic identity because of the anarchic element they introduced. A far more promising foundation was the cult of the Mother of God, the origins of which can be traced back in Constantinople to the fifth century, but it was only in the seventh century that it took hold of Constantinopolitan society and provided a unifying factor. Complementing this was a new interest in the traditions of the city, which were neglected in comparison to those of other great cities of the Roman empire.⁸⁶ This surfaces in

that strange collection known as the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, which purports to provide a guide to the monuments of the city. It was put together in the first half of the eighth century. It is a mixture of folklore and half-remembered stories which are given authenticity by erroneous attribution to named authors. As Dagron observes, “all this corresponds to the great crisis of the eighth century, to a Byzantium which was forging a new identity by rejecting its contradictory inheritances, and to a half ruined city, which had turned in on itself and seemed oblivious of the rest of the world and the Empire.”⁸⁷ The essential was the preservation of Constantinople. This was not just in the face of external enemies, for an emperor might be seen as an even greater menace if he forgot his obligations to Constantinople. This seems to have been the charge against Justinian II, who was in a weaker position than he realized. He failed to take account of the political implications of the capital’s new sense of identity and its sense of solidarity around the patriarch. The latter had the backing of the city’s elite, who resuscitated the senate as an instrument of their political power. A similar alliance in Rome had worked to undermine imperial authority. For a moment, as Patriarch Germanos transferred authority from one emperor to the next in quick succession, it looked as though this was also the case at Constantinople. Leo III ensured that this did not happen by isolating Patriarch Germanos and winning the support of both the Constantinopolitan elite and the populace. This he did by identifying the imperial office with Constantinople and the interests of its people.

How well Leo III and Constantine V had created this community of interest is clear from the fact that there was no comparable collapse of imperial authority until the eleventh century. In the intervening years there were coups, assassinations, rebellions, invasions, religious controversies, minorities, changes of dynasties, but the system continued to function. Its failure to adapt to the changes of the eleventh century is difficult to explain except in terms of the delayed repercussions of Basil II’s autocratic style of government.⁸⁸ Basil II’s death was followed by a relaxation of imperial control, which favoured the growth of aristocratic power.

It could be argued that just as the emergence of a Constantinopolitan identity was the most important factor undermining imperial authority in the seventh century, so the growth of a hereditary aristocracy played much the same role in the eleventh century. It was also a potential threat to the ascendancy of Constantinople’s senatorial elite. Just as in the seventh century patriarch and senate combined to protect their position against changing circumstances, so the same happened in the eleventh century.⁸⁹ But this time the outcome was rather different. Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) integrated the aristocracy into imperial government. The result, as the historian John Zonaras complained, was that he ruled not as the steward of his people, but as a grasping landowner who indulged his relatives.⁹⁰ This produced a radical alteration in the political process which worked to the disadvantage of the senatorial elite and ultimately to that of Constantinople itself. The reaction against the Komnenian regime came in 1185 with the execution of Andronikos I Komnenos in the hippodrome amid the taunts of the Constantinopolitan populace, but his overthrow did not loosen the grip of the aristocracy on the levers of political power. All it did was to leave Constantinople exposed as the Fourth Crusade was sucked into the whirlpool of Byzantine politics.⁹¹

NOTES

- 1 Herrin 2007: 321.
- 2 Eisenstadt 1963; Darwin 2007. See also Arnason in this volume.
- 3 Alexander 1962: 339–57.
- 4 Cheynet 1990: 446–58.
- 5 Neville 2004: 39.
- 6 See Haldon in this volume.
- 7 Cheynet 1990: 20–72, nos. 2, 3, 12, 26, 37, 59, 85.
- 8 See Featherstone in this volume.
- 9 See Stephenson in this volume, ch. 2.
- 10 Patlagean 1984: 23–43.
- 11 Beck 1966b; Angold 1993.
- 12 Lemerle 1967; Oikonomides 1997.
- 13 See Beck 1966c: esp. 57.
- 14 Gautier 1981: 21.45–7.
- 15 ODB: s.v. Senate House.
- 16 See Magdalino 1991: 188–91.
- 17 See Tougher 2002b, and in this volume.
- 18 ODB: s.v. John the Orphanotrophos.
- 19 See Bourbouhakis in this volume.
- 20 Dagron 2003a: 84–124.
- 21 Dagron 2003a: 223–47.
- 22 Dagron 2003a: 158–91.
- 23 Dagron 2003a: 50.
- 24 See Haldon in this volume.
- 25 See Morrisson in this volume.
- 26 Oikonomides 1987: 9–19; Haldon 1990: 141–52.
- 27 In general, see Ahrweiler 1966: 17–35.
- 28 Theophanes 1883: I, 377.27–9: ἀπὸ διανομῆς τῶν οἰκούντων τὴν πόλιν συγκλητικῶν τε καὶ ἐργαστηριακῶν καὶ δημοτῶν καὶ παντὸς ὀφφικίου.
- 29 Theophanes 1883: I, 352.14–23. On the date see Theophanes 1997: 492.
- 30 Llewellyn 1993: 160–1.
- 31 Theophanes 1883: I, 369.21–3. See Beck 1966c: 41.
- 32 Theophanes 1883: I, 368–9; Nikephoros 1990: §40.20–42.
- 33 See Kaegi 1981: 186–208; Treadgold 1997: 337–45.
- 34 On the rise of the civic cult of the Mother of God see now Pentcheva 2006a: 10–35.
- 35 Theophanes 1883: I, 383.6–7, 15–17. For the exact function of the *ornatorion*, see Theophanes 1997: 534.
- 36 See Beck 1966c: 31.
- 37 Theophanes 1883: I, 375.8–13. See McCormick 1986: 73.
- 38 See van Dieten 1972: 156–60; *PBE* I: s.v. Kallinikos 2; Cameron 1979; Pentcheva 2006a: 4–6, 12, 62–3 and *passim*.
- 39 Haldon 1990, 1997: 395–402.
- 40 E.g. on the eve of his overthrow Philippikos Bardanes went to dine μετὰ πολιτῶν ἀρχαιογενῶν: Theophanes 1883: I, 383.9.
- 41 Stein 1920. Redolent of Germanos' ancient lineage was the decision he took in 730 to retire to his πατρικὸν οἶκον: Nikephoros 1990: §62.6–7.
- 42 Haldon 1990, 1997: 396.
- 43 Report of the *Chartophylax* Agatho in Riedinger 1992, pp. 898–901; *PBE* I: s.v. Agatho 3.
- 44 Llewellyn 1993: 163–5.
- 45 Riedinger 1992: 901–8.
- 46 Riedinger 1992: 898–900. Beck thinks that the soldiers must be the palace guard, rather than thematic detachments: Beck 1966c: 31, n. 60.
- 47 Theophanes 1883: I, 384.22–385.2. On the patriarch Germanos, see Lilie 1999: 5–21; *PBE* I: s.v.

- Germanos 8. For the possibility that Germanos became patriarch in 714 rather than in 715, see Theophanes 1997: 536.
- 48 Theophanes 1883: I, 351.24–8.
- 49 Theophanes 1883: I, 367.15–21; Nikephoros 1990: §39.1–6; *PBE* I: s.v. Stephanos 4.
- 50 Cormack 1985: 96–101.
- 51 Brown 1984: 48, 148; Brown 1995: 29–36.
- 52 Riedinger 1992: 901–8.
- 53 Theophanes 1883: I, 385.2–4.
- 54 Theophanes 1883: I, 347.13, p. 351.21. Cf. Llewellyn 1993: 164.
- 55 Theophanes 1883: I, 386.7–12; Nikephoros 1990: §51.16–20.
- 56 Theophanes 1883: I, 497.7–26.
- 57 Theophanes 1883: I, 390.20–26.
- 58 Theophanes 1883: I, 407.27–9.
- 59 Theophanes 1883: I, 387.1–14, 395.13–15.
- 60 Constantine Porphyrogenetos 1967: §21.123–6. Cf. Theophanes 1883: I, 396.16–17, 397.12–13, 398.1, 399.8.
- 61 Grumel 1958. Cf. Speck 1986, where his attempt to show that the sermon is a later schoolboy exercise does not convince.
- 62 Theophanes 1883: I, 400.1–8.
- 63 Theophanes 1883: I, 401.9–12; Nikephoros 1990: §58.1–5.
- 64 Theophanes 1883: I, 400–1; Nikephoros 1990: §57.1–36.
- 65 Llewellyn 1993: 165–9.
- 66 Whitting 1970. Admittedly, his later issues showed his portrait on the obverse and his son Constantine's on the reverse. The theme here is dynastic.
- 67 Theophanes 1883: I, 405.7–8; Herrin and Cameron 1984: §44a.5, §78.7–10. See Auzépy 1990: 446–8.
- 68 Theophanes 1883: I, 407–9; Nikephoros 1990: §62.1–12. Cf. Stein 1980.
- 69 Nikephoros 1990: §57.33–5.
- 70 Theophanes 1883: I, 408.32; Nikephoros 1990: §62.1–2.
- 71 Theophanes 1883: I, 427.19–24; Auzépy 1997: 140.1–2.
- 72 Theophanes 1883: I, 441–2; Nikephoros 1990: §84.1–17. See Lilie 1999: 30–44; *PBE* I: s.v. Konstantinos 4.
- 73 Cameron 1976: 297–308.
- 74 Theophanes 1883: I, 439.19–27.
- 75 Anastos 1955: 185–6.
- 76 Theophanes 1883: I, 438.8–26; Nikephoros 1990: §83.1–25 for Constantine V's repression of an alleged plot hatched by leading Constantinopolitan figures in 765.
- 77 Theophanes 1883: I, 400–1; Nikephoros 1990: §57.1–36.
- 78 Lilie 1999: 22–9; *PBE* I: s.v. Anastasios 2.
- 79 Burgmann 1983: 162.40–51.
- 80 Burgmann 1983: 166.102–9.
- 81 Theophanes 1883: I, 367.17–18.
- 82 Theophanes 1883: I, 412.6–21.
- 83 See Magdalino 2007b.
- 84 Dagron 2003a: 31.
- 85 Burgmann 1983: 164.66–8, 80–2.
- 86 Dagron 1984: 23–9.
- 87 Dagron 1984: 30.
- 88 See Angold 1997: 24–34; Angold 2004: 220–4. For an opposing view, see Holmes 2005: 525–43.
- 89 Beck 1966c: 57–9.
- 90 Zonaras 1841–97: III, xviii, xxi, 8; 732–3; xviii, xxix, 19–24; 765.11–19.
- 91 Angold 2005.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE BYZANTINE ARISTOCRACY AND THE DECLINE OF THE IMPERIAL STATE *



Paul Stephenson

THE ELEVENTH CENTURY: c. 950–1081

It is now clear, contrary to interpretations that prevailed through most of the twentieth century, that the economy of the Byzantine empire expanded rapidly between 950 and 1200.¹ It is also clear that in this same period an aristocracy emerged which was integral to the state system, but whose power did not rest exclusively on access to offices of state. While public office remained prestigious and potentially lucrative throughout the period under consideration, to paraphrase Michael Psellos, the great polymath of the eleventh century, many preferred to “belch forth their family’s great name.”² These belchers included the Phokades, Doukai and Komnenoi, each in turn an imperial family, but whose members were committed in the first instance to the promotion of the family and its interests at the expense of the state. The emergence of a self-aware aristocracy can be traced in histories, chronicles and saints’ lives, where, by 1200, 80 per cent of individuals bear a second name, in contrast to 20 per cent in c. 800.³ The emergence of aristocratic self-consciousness is even more marked on the lead seals which were used to secure and guarantee official correspondence. There has survived from before 900 not a single seal which bears a family name, but dozens from the last quarter of the tenth century and hundreds (perhaps thousands) from the eleventh century bear surnames. The typical seal bears a forename followed by the title and rank held by the individual in the state hierarchy, and ends with the surname.⁴ These individuals, representatives both of the state and of their families, may have felt conflicted loyalties, but a wealth of evidence suggests that few felt any compunction to place the interests of the state above those of kin.

The best researched body of evidence for this conflict between the state and the aristocrats is the land legislation issued by emperors of the tenth century, principally Romanos I (920–44), Constantine VII (913/944–59) and Basil II (963/976–1025). Each of these emperors issued laws, known as “novels” (*nearai*), directed against the so-called “powerful” (*dynatoi*), seeking to curtail encroachments upon lands pertaining to the “poor” (*penetes*, *ptochoi*). The rhetoric of “powerful” and “poor” masked an underlying reality which had little to do with the wellbeing of the humble subject

or peasant farmer: the state was losing taxable land to wealthy families who were better placed to offer protection or assert patronage, and to resist taxation.⁵ Land acquisition might follow crop failure, famine or drought, as the earliest legislation suggests. However, the “powerful” were increasingly able to assert dominance in good years, thanks to population growth and a fairly vigorous land market. Having acquired land, by fair means or foul, the “powerful” could resist demands for taxes more easily than the “poor,” whether by barring access to tax collectors and their armed retinues, by seeking exemptions from the emperor, or indeed by gaining responsibility for the fiscal administration of a particular district.⁶ Consequently, emperors began to demonstrate a keen desire to ensure the fiscal integrity of the village (*chorion*), which also happened to be the corporate entity responsible for the payment of land taxes. The fact that, in 996, Basil II issued stronger legislation to enforce this policy suggests, of course, that it was not working. But by now, emperors had devised alternative methods to compete with the aristocrats: to act in the same manner as the “powerful” but to back this with the coercive force of the state.⁷

Romanos I, author of the first novels against the “powerful” (*dynatoi*), was also the first emperor to incorporate newly conquered lands into the imperial domain as an estate (*kouratoria*). However, it remained the case that abandoned land (*klasma*), for example that abandoned in the face of threat, invasion or crop failure, was to remain within the *chorion*. Basil II reversed this policy, acquiring *klasma* for the state, and adding to it further conquered territories, upon which were settled dependent peasant farmers (*paroikoi*) who paid rents. Basil II evidently inspired fear in his “powerful” subjects sufficient to enforce his legislation, even obliging the wealthy to pay tax arrears owed by the “poor.” That is, he shifted the corporate responsibility for taxes (*allelengyon*) owed by peasants who had defaulted or disappeared from the village (*chorion*) to the powerful (*dynatoi*).⁸

Basil also instituted a new government department, the *Sekreton ton oikeiakon*, which was responsible for the control of state land, including the collection of rents from dependents. By the turn of the twelfth century this department had become the principal body responsible for taxation in the provinces. This change in policy had a significant social impact, especially when placed alongside the continuing growth in landed interests of the “powerful.” Nicolas Oikonomides summarized it thus:

There was undoubtedly an increase in the assets of the state, [and consequently] the composition of society in rural areas changed substantially as the number of dependent villagers (*paroikoi*) rose. In other words, there was a tendency for the economic benefits of the state to be maximized to the detriment of the social structure of the provinces, as the state turned to implementation of the same policy as that which the *dynatoi* . . . were also applying.⁹

One might temper this negative characterization with the information, provided by Psellos, that emperors sought also to improve productivity through land reclamation and innovations in estate management and farming techniques:

The acumen [of Constantine IX] was proved by the profits he made; by the clever ways in which he saved labour; the successful yet economical basis on which he ran his estates . . . by the way he forestalled the seasons in the development of

crops; by the ingenious inventions which enabled him to dispense with farm-workers; by the miracles of improvisation, so wonderful that most people could not believe their own eyes when they saw a field today where yesterday they had seen a flat plain and two days ago a hill.¹⁰

Monasteries were also active in cultivating new land and improving estate management. The founder of the Great Lavra on Mt Athos, St Athanasios, is said to have reclaimed land and provided irrigation to a barren rocky headland.¹¹ Athanasios benefited from a large donation by the future emperor Nikephoros Phokas which financed the initial construction. Thereafter, the Lavra was as acquisitive and competitive as any of the “powerful,” at the forefront of those whose ability to coerce and patronize created a class of *paroikoi* from previously free peasant farmers. Indeed, it is redundant to distinguish between the activities of secular aristocrats and monasteries, for in a society which knew no religious orders – despite the model provided from c. 800 by the Studites – members of the secular aristocracy were able and anxious to establish private religious foundations, for the salvation of their souls and those of family members. To ensure the continuity of such foundations, exemptions (*exkousseia*) were secured from additional land taxes and corvées.¹² Every emperor but Michael V (who died within a year of taking office in 1041) is known to have granted extensive privileges to leading monasteries, particularly those on Athos. As the monasteries acquired greater wealth, increasingly they were not obliged to send gold back to Constantinople.

Public expenditure in the tenth and eleventh centuries was primarily annual payments in gold (*rogai*) to state functionaries, military, ecclesiastical and civilian, Constantinopolitan and (partially) provincial. One distribution ceremony was observed, famously, by Liudprand of Cremona on Palm Sunday, 24 March 950.¹³ This gold was then expected to trickle down to lower levels, through payments by the elites to their subordinates, by commercial exchanges or via professional moneychangers, for all were obliged in September to pay their taxes in gold if the amount owed was valued at over $2/3$ *nomisma*. Change (*antistrophe*) would be given in copper coins.¹⁴ Only some provincial functionaries were entitled, indeed obliged, to draw their salaries as levies or “donations” (*synetheiai*) from their localities.¹⁵ One can imagine that this blurring of the distinction between the exercise of public authority and private power would lead to greater tension in the periphery, and also would exacerbate the principal phenomenon here described, namely the growth of private aristocratic wealth and power at the expense of the state. It is important in this context to note that the principal functionaries who drew no state *roga* and were obliged to draw all resources from the lands where they were based included all the military governors (*strategoi*) of lands west of the river Strymon, being the Balkan lands conquered by Basil II.

Hoarding money had always been popular, and thus the practice (*thesaurizein*) was legislated against by a state anxious to keep gold in circulation.¹⁶ In the 1030s massive private fortunes were amassed, only a few of which the state was empowered to confiscate. For example, two senior clerics, Patriarch Alexios Stoudios (d. 1043) and Theophanes, metropolitan of Thessalonika (d. 1038), were deprived of gold stores of, respectively, 2,500 and 3,300 talents (a total of 417,600 *nomismata*).¹⁷ This amount of gold held by just two of the “powerful” was the equivalent of

perhaps 10 per cent of the annual state budget, which has been estimated at 4–5 million *nomismata*; and is probably more than the number of new *nomismata* minted in any given year (c. 250,000–350,000).¹⁸

In the 1040s, John the *Orphanotrophos*, minister of state, introduced tax farming on a grand scale throughout Byzantine lands, presumably as a device to extract large sums of gold quickly from the wealthy as supplies in state coffers dried up. This policy continued throughout the eleventh century, with serious social consequences. In the first instance, selling taxation rights to the “powerful” was at the expense of the “poor” – these tenth-century legal categories persisted through the eleventh century. The “poor” were immediately subject to a massive increase in extraordinary levies and corvées, and if they could not pay were obliged to sell up and enter the service of the “powerful.”¹⁹ Ultimately, therefore, the policy was at the expense of the state, which experienced greater social unrest, and enjoyed a diminished capacity to control its own agents. Moreover, since the “powerful” had no inclination to levy taxes on their own lands, less taxation revenue reached the imperial treasury even as more of the excess wealth was siphoned off into private hands.

The demand for gold also led to a rise in interest rates in Constantinople. According to the *Peira*, a legal compilation produced before 1045, there was a corresponding reduction in the yield of annual stipends on honorific titles in the Byzantine administration.²⁰ Offices of state were, for the most part, purchased for a non-refundable cash payment. This represented an investment in and over a bureaucratic career, since the annual *roga* payment represented a return of 2.5–3.5 per cent on junior titles, and 5.5–8.3 per cent for more senior (e.g. senatorial) titles.²¹ By 1045, most *roga* payments, which were fixed, represented a poor investment when compared with lending money at interest on the open market. However, offices of state carried great prestige, and as such proved extremely attractive to the *nouveaux riches*. Psellos wrote disparagingly of Constantine IX for having “thrown open the doors of the senate” to different social groups, principally administrative employees formerly ineligible for such promotion.²² Constantine did so not to diversify the social basis of the elite – even if this was one of the consequences – nor indeed to promote the interests of the “civilian” over the “military” aristocracy, as Ostrogorsky once argued.²³ The most obvious reason to offer offices of state more widely was the desire to receive large payments in gold from those with social aspirations.²⁴ Even more obvious, therefore, was the determination by Constantine X Doukas (1059–67) to make merchants and manufacturers in the capital eligible for membership of the senate. According to Michael Attaleiates, Constantine X “desired above all else the increase of public finance and the hearing of private lawsuits” to raise money through fines.²⁵ A complementary policy was the sale of senatorial status, to the extent of devaluing the prestige attached to it.²⁶ If the tenth-century price of the rank of *protospatharios* – the entry-level rank for a senator – remained the same, each new senator provided a lump-sum payment in gold of 60 talents (4,320 *nomismata*) to the treasury, redirecting money from the booming markets of Constantinople back into the state economy.

The most obvious way for an emperor, or indeed empress, to retain gold was to scorn traditional distribution ceremonies. We know that upon her accession to sole rule, following the death of her husband Constantine IX in 1055, Theodora refused to make the distributions to state functionaries expected of any new monarch. She

did so by claiming that this was not her first accession, having ruled with her sister Zoe before her marriage to Constantine in 1042. Isaac I Komnenos (1057–9) had no such excuse, but went further still, rescinding donations made by his ephemeral predecessor Michael VI (1056–7). He earned the wrath of the Church by “cutting off the greater part of the monies set aside for their sacred buildings and, having transferred these funds to the public funds, estimated the bare necessities for the clergy.”²⁷ Without Basil II’s iron-grip on power, Isaac’s actions brought his ouster.

Still these measures were not sufficient to prevent the debasement of the coinage, gradually to the end of the 1060s, and rapidly as the state went bankrupt in the 1070s. Emperors from Michael IV (1034–41) to Romanos IV (1068–71) reduced the gold content of the full-weight *nomisma* from twenty-two to eighteen carats. In the 1070s this slumped to sixteen, then to ten and then to eight carats. There was a correspondingly rapid debasement of the silver coinage, since much of the limited silver supply was being added to the gold coinage.²⁸ According to Morrisson, the gradual debasement of the period c. 1040–70 was deliberate for the purposes of development, given that the volume of trade had increased much more rapidly than the quantity of gold available to service its demands. Although the entire gold coinage was not melted down and restruck by each emperor, if it had been the number of gold coins in circulation would have increased by 5 per cent each year. A more realistic figure, Morrisson suggests, is 1 per cent per year, or an increase of one-third in the number of gold coins circulating over the period 1040–70. Still, this was not enough to meet ever increasing demands, triggering the crisis debasements of the 1070s, and the collapse of the entire fiscal and tax systems.²⁹

What sparked the crisis debasement, and thus served as a catalyst for the collapse of the state economy? In 1071 the empire suffered assaults by the Seljuk Turks and Turkoman nomads, and by a range of peoples in the Balkans and beyond the Balkan frontier. It has long been argued that the battle of Manzikert, which the Byzantines lost to the Seljuks on 26 August 1071, was not a major military reversal for the empire. However, it was symptomatic of factionalism within the capital between competing aristocratic families: the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes lost the support of the Doukas family, who betrayed him on the battlefield and afterwards.³⁰ Nor did the extended aftermath of the battle, when bands of Turkoman nomads gradually settled the interior plateau of Anatolia, deprive the empire of essential, productive lands. The region was occupied primarily by huge ranches owned by a few aristocratic families, and the loss of these was of far less consequence than the preservation of control over the fertile coastal lands of Asia Minor. It has even been suggested that the loss of the central plateau, if not to the benefit of the state in geopolitical terms, was to the benefit of the new imperial dynasty, the Komnenoi, who demonstrated no urgent desire to drive the Turks and Turkmen out. Ultimately the empire paid a high price, but it was not primarily economic.³¹

The Balkan and Italian lands of the empire were no more stable at this time than Anatolia. In 1071 again, Bari, the last Byzantine stronghold in southern Italy, fell to the Normans. In the same year, the Danube frontier came under attack from the Hungarians, at Belgrade, and the Pechenegs who crossed the lower Danube and plundered throughout Thrace and Macedonia. Consequently “the Slavic people threw off the Roman yoke and laid waste Bulgaria taking plunder and leaving scorched earth. Skopje and Nish were sacked, and all the towns along the river Sava

and beside the Danube between Sirmium and Vidin suffered greatly. Furthermore, the Croats and Dukljans throughout the whole of Dalmatia rose in rebellion.”³² A decade of rule by the Doukas family failed to effect a recovery, and it fell to Alexios I Komnenos and his aristocratic family, first to restore order, which took until 1091, and then to devise structures and institutions that reflected, developed and exploited new realities in the twelfth century.

THE TWELFTH CENTURY: 1081–1183

The coup which brought Alexios I to the throne in 1081 was a family affair, and the regime that he established placed family – his own relatives by blood or marriage – at the centre of government. For this reason the rise of the house of Komnenos has been considered proof of the triumph of the military aristocracy. We might better consider it the culmination of a number of tendencies which, coming to the fore over the previous century, had seen power and wealth decentralized and central government starved of gold. It was the great achievement of the Komnenoi that they brought the state back from bankruptcy even as they restored the geographical integrity of the empire, driving waves of invaders back and reaching accommodations with new settlers. However, the methods by which this recovery was achieved saw the empire of earlier centuries transformed.

Alexios, like his imperial uncle Isaac I, made an early enemy of the institutional Church through his attempts to finance recovery. Soon after his accession he seized holy vessels from churches and monasteries and melted them down to strike coin, much of which he used to pay his troops. Anna Komnene’s *apologia* for her father’s behaviour suggests that criticism was fierce, although this was certainly not the first time such an action had been taken.³³ While Alexios was engaged in warfare against Normans, Pechenegs and Turks, he placed his mother in charge of domestic administration, with an official known as the *logothetes* of the *sekreta* to act on her behalf as head of the civil service.³⁴ At the same time, the traditional system of honours was radically altered: honorary ranks and titles were not abolished, but they were left to wither on the vine with the removal of associated stipends (*rogai*). Initially left unpaid as a response to the bankruptcy of the state, Alexios determined simply not to restore the *rogai*.³⁵ Moreover, rather than pack the existing hierarchy with his appointees, Alexios instituted an entirely new tier of court titles over and above those which existed, based on the rank of *sebastos*. The term – an imperial epithet deriving from the Greek translation of Augustus – was reserved for members of the emperor’s extended family, by blood or marriage (and some high foreign dignitaries).³⁶

The historian John Zonaras criticized Alexios for acting not as an emperor, but as the head of an aristocratic house, running the government for the benefit of his family. Indeed, “he thought of and called the imperial palace his own house.”³⁷ Alexios did not pay his relatives in gold, but rather in privileges relating to land, and more specifically to the taxation of land. Examples are numerous, of which a couple may be cited. In 1084 the emperor’s cousin, the *protosebastos* Adrian Komnenos, was granted the right to collect and keep all taxes for the Kassandra peninsula. He was not granted the land, just its tax revenues.³⁸ Similarly, but more extensively, in 1094, the *sebastokrator* Isaac received the revenues of lands of Thessalonika, at the time the empire’s second city.³⁹ Besides his family, Alexios rewarded his

commanders. Gregory Pakourianos, commander-in-chief of the army, controlled extensive lands in and around Bachkovo (in present-day Bulgaria), where he founded the Petritzos monastery for his own retirement, and those of his loyal retinue of Armenians and Georgians. Pakourianos died before he could be tonsured, riding his horse headlong into a tree while fighting the Pechenegs, but his monastic foundation document (*typikon*) reveals that his estates were all granted to him by the emperor; that these had previously been state lands; and that he was to collect all state revenue connected with these lands as his own.⁴⁰ On a smaller scale, the general Leo Kephalas received, in 1084, a public estate (*proasteion*) which had previously been granted to other military men. There is no indication that this was a grant of taxation revenue, and it must be imagined therefore that Leo received the land in order to extract the profits from the dependent peasantry, while still paying taxes, and with the obligation to return the land to the state upon request or at his death. By contrast, in 1086, after his heroic defence of the city of Larissa in Thessaly, Leo received the village (*chorion*) of Chostiani, with exemption from all taxes and the right to bequeath the property. Ultimately, these lands came into the possession of the Great Lavra monastery on Athos.⁴¹

Clearly, relatives of the emperor or his loyal commanders received income directly from taxpayers, who became their dependents (*paroikoi*). This obviated the need for the state to collect revenue itself, and thus circumvented, to some extent, the need to recoup gold and mint ever more coins to service the state economy.⁴² Still, money continued to change hands, and did so with ever increasing currency. It was a further achievement of this emperor to introduce an entirely new coinage in or shortly after 1092, based on the *hyperpyron nomisma*, a cupped or “scyphate” gold coin of twenty-one carats.⁴³ The reformed currency also allowed for, indeed required, a radical revision of the taxation system, which achieved its final form in 1109.⁴⁴ Details of the transition from the old to the new system are contained in two remarkable documents known as the *Palaia Logarike* and *Nea Logarike*, “the old and new accounting.”⁴⁵ Here we may discern recognition of the shift which had taken place from a system predicated on the existence of a largely free peasantry, organized into fiscal units known as villages (*choria*), to one where large estates predominated, and efficiency demanded assessment of disparate, non-contiguous holdings pertaining to “powerful” families or institutions. “The archaic term *epibol[e]* was used to refer to the new fiscal practice that amounted to the first step toward the simplified taxation on land for centuries to come and that was easier to apply to large holdings of agricultural land.”⁴⁶ Unlike the old system, it took no account of the quality of land to be taxed, so while a simplification, it cannot be regarded as an improvement. In parallel with the *epibole*, the compilation of *praktika* came to replace the onerous system of maintaining land registers recording the fluctuating holdings of each village throughout the empire. Instead, taxpayers who owned land in more than one tax unit (*chorion*) could request that all their obligations be grouped in one document, the *praktikon*, which could more easily be updated as an individual or institution gained more land or secured greater privileges. Naturally, this was accompanied by a thorough fiscal survey of, at least, the empire’s core European provinces.

Such a drastic overhaul of the fiscal and taxation systems required a similar restructuring of the fiscal administration. The *Sekreton ton oikeiakon*, which was initially responsible for the control of state land, became the principal bureau in all

matters relating to provincial taxation, preparing the way for an institution we shall examine shortly: *pronoia*.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Alexios swept away many obsolete departments in creating two new accounting bureaux (*logariastika sekreta*), each presided over by a *logariastes*: the *megas logariastes ton sekretou*, “grand accountant of the departments,” who audited all fiscal services; and the very similarly named *megas logariastes ton euagon sekretou*, who was concerned with “charitable departments,” but primarily audited imperial property.⁴⁸ The title “grand accountant of charitable departments” reflects the fact that the emperor placed philanthropy at the centre of his financial reforms. As a pious autocrat, he did so in a manner intended to glorify his own reputation and family name, and to patronize the urban poor: he founded, or more correctly refounded, a massive charitable enterprise known as the *Orphanotropheion*, or “Orphanage.”⁴⁹

Dwarfing all previous aristocratic foundations, the “Orphanage” complex on the acropolis point in Constantinople expanded over several acres. All activities were sustained from lands which the emperor granted, often at the expense of earlier imperial foundations. Thousands of disabled, elderly or indigent adults joined the children, with at least one member of staff to each inmate. There was a church and four monasteries, one for men and three for women (deaconesses, virgins and Georgian nuns), who prayed for the physical and spiritual recovery of the sick. A school instructed both orphans, who lived in the complex, and children of poor parents, who perhaps did not, in music, Greek grammar and Christian doctrine. The *Orphanotropheion* served as a monumental example of the emperor’s power and patronage, past which imperial processions were rerouted and where he received splendid sung acclamations, and as a centre for instilling beliefs which his regime cherished, to the detriment of innovative instruction which had flourished in eleventh-century schools. In this last regard it held true to the original purpose of the orphanage, to promote a particular set of beliefs among the young.

Alexios I’s reign was punctuated by measures aimed at refining and reforming aspects of the eleventh-century situation he had inherited. Early measures smacked of crisis management, cobbled together as they were in the face of state bankruptcy, foreign invasion and a cumbersome bureaucracy. Later measures exploited the political capital won by averting the total collapse of the state to construct a system which suited and benefited a small, intermarried, aristocratic elite. As a consequence of Alexios’ reforms, gold was released from the state economy to circulate in the market economy by the massive expansion in grants of land-based tax privileges. These grants may even have bolstered local market economies, where the new masters of lands “encouraged” dependent peasants (*paroikoi*) to expand production. Whereas the state collected taxes in cash, those granted the right to taxation revenues most likely collected taxes and rent in kind, and sold the surplus to pay off obligations to the state (if they were not granted complete exemption). While such grants of land and tax privileges had a long history, and had grown significantly in the eleventh century, particularly in the realm of grants to monastic foundations, Alexios Komnenos was the first to use them systematically to reward his family and military. Thereafter, “in the twelfth century, the special donation ceased to be a mere fiscal instrument and became a fully developed system for the financing of state officials and officers. It was based on a change that made little practical difference to the beneficiary but was of colossal significance to the state: the donation was for life only

and could not be inherited.”⁵⁰ In this way, state land was not permanently alienated, and could be regranted. This system came to be known by well-established terms for imperial “dispensation” or “foresight”: *oikonomia* or *pronoia*.

There are a few references to state land being granted to soldiers, and subsequently regranted to other soldiers during Alexios’ reign, for example in Macedonia.⁵¹ However, examples become numerous during the reign of his grandson, Manuel I (1143–80), and the historian Niketas Choniates provides a clear explanation of the practice. Soldiers, some of whom were “barbarians,” Choniates notes, collected from the peasants what they would otherwise have paid to the state, and the emperor ceased to pay the soldiers from the treasury. This was no longer restricted to soldiers of exceptional merit – for example Gregory Pakourianos or Leo Kephala – but was applied writ large.⁵² The decentralization and demonetization of the Byzantine taxation system had significant social consequences. Many peasant farmers now enjoyed the regular presence of a military “lord” who will have treated them as his dependents, although technically they remained state *paroikoi*. This may also, of course, have entailed benefits: an interested overseer willing to provide capital investment and protection for his benefice. But any such “patronage” was a significant departure from the days of peasant corporate responsibility through the village (*chorion*).⁵³

COLLAPSE: 1183–1204

Two key features of the mature Komnenian system, therefore, were an increased reliance on land and taxation privileges; and the consolidation of the power and influence of a group of aristocrats related to the Komnenoi by blood or marriage. Both proved problematic in the last decades of the twelfth century; in combination they proved cataclysmic for the empire, provoking a series of invasions and rebellions. Niketas Choniates offers the following explanation for the rapid decline in imperial fortunes:

It was the Komnenos family that was the major cause of the destruction of the empire. Because of their ambitions and their rebellions, she suffered the subjugation of provinces and cities and finally fell to her knees. These Komnenoi, who sojourned among barbarian peoples hostile to the Byzantines, were the utter ruin of their empire, and whenever they attempted to seize and hold sway over public affairs, they were the most inept, unfit and stupid of men.⁵⁴

Here Choniates highlights the major problem with the Komnenian system: reliance on kinship ties led, over time, to internecine competition between powerful rivals with equally acceptable claims to rule. Very early in his reign, Manuel I had survived at least three challenges to his authority by *sebastoi*.⁵⁵ The most notorious threats to have been reported were that of his confidant Alexios Axouch in 1167, and those of his cousin Andronikos in the 1150s and 1160s. Andronikos finally succeeded, in 1182–3, in removing Manuel’s young son Alexios II. Andronikos had a power base within the upper echelons of the aristocracy, favouring alternative members of Manuel’s, and therefore his own extended kin group. Ultimately, his regime, which commenced with the massacre of Latins, proved too cruel to secure widespread support, and too brief to implement substantial reforms. Just two years after his

accession, Andronikos was deposed by one of the many cousins in his extended kin group, Isaac Angelos, the great-grandson of Alexios I. But Isaac, who had represented the interests of a group of aristocratic families opposed to Andronikos, fell victim to factionalism himself. He endured numerous coups during his ten-year reign before, in 1195, he was overthrown by his own brother, Alexios III Angelos, who also suffered a series of coups. An attempt which nearly succeeded was engineered in 1200 by a certain John Komnenos “the Fat,” who was the grandson of John II by his daughter Maria. His father was the seditious confidant of Manuel I, the *sebastos* Alexios Axouch.

As the *sebastoi* competed for control of the centre, the periphery of the empire slipped from their grasp. According to Angold, “there were now important local interests to protect. Their defence was increasingly in the hands of local ascendancies, often referred to as *archontes*. There was always a tendency at times of weak government or political crisis for each town to come under the control of a dynast or city boss, who was normally a representative of local interests.”⁵⁶ Now *archontes* were in receipt of local taxation revenues, and increasingly reluctant to recognize ineffectual and ephemeral rulers in Constantinople. Several, in regions with no history of independent rule, claimed autonomy from Constantinople. Notable examples are Theodore Mangaphas in Philadelphia (near Sardis in Asia Minor) and Isaac Komnenos on Cyprus.⁵⁷

Others, with dormant traditions of independent rule, began to look elsewhere for patrons or symbols of power and prestige. Thus in 1189 the rulers of Serbia and Bulgaria sought an alliance with the German emperor Frederick Barbarossa. They intended not merely to defend their own interests, as had several pretenders to the Hungarian throne during Manuel’s reign, but to launch an attack on Constantinople itself. And in 1203–4, Kalojan (Ioannitsa), the ruler of the Bulgarian realm, rejected an offer by the Byzantine emperor, Alexios III, to recognize his imperial title and grant Bulgaria a patriarch. He preferred to negotiate with Pope Innocent III, and to receive the insignia of regnal and archiepiscopal – not imperial and patriarchal – offices from Rome.⁵⁸

In the same year, 1203–4, the Venetian fleet that ferried the forces of the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople carried the blinded Isaac II and his son Alexios. We know from western sources that Alexios offered the Venetians full payment of the sum specified in their contract with the leaders of the Fourth Crusade. Therefore, instead of ferrying the Latins directly to the Holy Land, the fleet sailed via Zadar to Constantinople in order to install Alexios on the imperial throne. Alexios IV was the archetypal Komnenian princeling so loathed by Choniates: nurtured among barbarians, an inept and stupid man who brought utter ruin to the empire. With the sack of the city the imperial system collapsed, never fully to be reconstituted.

NOTES

* An earlier and somewhat different version of this essay appeared as Stephenson 2004. I am grateful to the editors, J. Arnason and B. Wittrock, for permission to reproduce my thoughts here.

1 Hendy 1970: 31–52, whose interpretation swiftly received almost universal acceptance. The new orthodoxy has been enshrined in Laiou 2002b, which corrects the dominant interpretation of Ostrogorsky 1968. See now Laiou and Morrisson 2007, and Morrisson in this volume.

- 2 Sathas 1874: IV, 430–1, quoted in fuller translation by Angold 1997: 67. There have been, in recent years, extensive studies of the aristocracy and its ethos. To start with, see the papers collected in Angold 1984.
- 3 Patlagean 1984; Kazhdan 1997.
- 4 Stephenson 1994; with corrections offered by Seibt 2002; Seibt 2003.
- 5 The division of society into the powerful and the poor had been articulated in late antiquity, and no new vocabulary had been introduced to better describe the medieval situation. See Patlagean 1977.
- 6 Oikonomides 2002: 1005: “the difficulty of preventing encroachment on state land was largely the result of the inherent weaknesses of an administrative mechanism staffed by aristocrats [who] were called upon to take action against aristocrats.”
- 7 The texts of all relevant novels are collected with commentary in Svoronos (1994).
- 8 For a careful explanation see Lemerle 1979a: 78–80. On the fear Basil inspired, see now Stephenson 2003; Holmes 2005.
- 9 Oikonomides 2002: 1006.
- 10 Psellos, *Chronographia*, VI, 175.
- 11 *Life of Athanasios of Athos*, Vita B, 24; (ed.) Noret 1982: 150–1.
- 12 See in general Morris 1995.
- 13 Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, VI, 10; Wright 1930: 211–12.
- 14 Oikonomides 2002: 995–6.
- 15 See Oikonomides 1997: 199–215; Oikonomides 2002: 999, 1009–11.
- 16 Morrisson 2002: 939, 950, estimates that at any given time one-third of all gold coins would be hoarded, and thus out of circulation. Angold 1997: 85, translates a short poem of the mid-eleventh century, by Christopher of Mytilene: “Having gazed on money, much as a polecat does on fat / You accumulate gold just to bury it in a vat / What good does it do you underground / When that is where you are bound?” See Kurtz 1903: no. 134.
- 17 Angold 1997: 85; Oikonomides 2002: 1018.
- 18 Morrisson 2002: 937, 941.
- 19 The total tax burden, the *arithmion*, usually amounted to 23–30 per cent of income on farmed land. Exemptions from payments of additional levies could be granted, most often to monasteries and the “powerful.” At the other end of the spectrum, additional corvées could be imposed upon the “poor” by unscrupulous tax farmers (i.e. agents of the “powerful”), significantly increasing their total tax burden. See Oikonomides 2002: 995–6.
- 20 Oikonomides 2002: 1020.
- 21 Oikonomides 2002: 1009.
- 22 Psellos, *Chronographia*, VI, 29. It is likely that all those promoted were not “rascally vagabonds of the market.”
- 23 Ostrogorsky 1968: 342. On this generally see Angold 1997: 16–17: “The old notion . . . that the eleventh century crisis received political expression in the shape of a struggle between the civil and military aristocracy . . . has been quietly shelved.”
- 24 This runs contrary to Psellos’ assertion, that “Constantine’s idea was to exhaust the treasury of its money.” Elsewhere Psellos attributes the poor state of public finances to the building projects of various emperors (generally imperial church or monastic foundations) and to the extravagance of the empresses Zoe and Theodora, who “confused the trifles of the harem (*gynaikonitis*) with important matters of state.” See Psellos, *Chronographia*, VI, 5. Angold 1997: 83, follows this line of reasoning.
- 25 Attaleiates 1853: 76; quoted in fuller translation by Magdalino 1994: 94.
- 26 Psellos, *Chronographia*, VI, 30: “Gradually the error of the policy became apparent when privileges, much coveted in the old days, were now distributed with a generous abandon that knew no limits, with the consequence that the recipients lost distinction.” See also Zonaras, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst 1897: III, 676, for further information on the sale of offices.
- 27 Psellos, *Chronographia*, VII, 60.
- 28 See, in the first instance, Morrisson in this volume. Also, Morrisson 2002: 930–2; Morrisson 1976.
- 29 Oikonomides 2002: 1020.
- 30 Angold 1997: 44–8.
- 31 Hendy 1989: III, 3–9, esp. 9: “there can be little doubt that it was the disruption and/or loss of its main (i.e. Anatolian) territorial base that provided one of the main factors sealing the fate of the old

military aristocracy and permitting the formation – indeed the deliberate construction – of a new one involving the virtually complete Comnenian dynastic appropriation of the pre-existing state apparatus.”

- 32 Bryennios 1975: 211. See also Tsolakes 1968: 162–3; Stephenson 2000: 141–4.
- 33 Indeed, Oikonomides 2002: 1017, suggests we might view this as standard procedure: excess wealth was hoarded in this form, a symbol of imperial generosity in good times, to be cashed in in periods of crisis. See *Alexiad*, V, 1–2. However, see also Pentcheva in this volume.
- 34 On this official, see Magdalino 1996b: 153–5; Magdalino 1994: 110–11.
- 35 Oikonomides 2002: 1021.
- 36 Magdalino 1993: 181. See also Magdalino 1996b: 147–8, for fuller references to research on “the family regime.”
- 37 Zonaras, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst 1897: III, 766.
- 38 Oikonomides 2002: 1040; Lemerle *et al.* 1970: no. 46.
- 39 Oikonomides 2002: 1041; Lemerle *et al.* 1970: no. 151.
- 40 Gautier 1984: 5–146.
- 41 Oikonomides 2002: 1041; Lemerle *et al.* 1970: nos. 44, 45, 48, 49, 60.
- 42 Oikonomides 2002: 995.
- 43 See Morrisson in this volume and Morrisson 2002: 924, 932–3. The identification of the reformed coinage was the achievement of Hendy 1969.
- 44 Harvey 1989: 80–119.
- 45 Oikonomides 2002: 976, 1030.
- 46 Oikonomides 2002: 1031.
- 47 Oikonomides 1976: 136–7.
- 48 Oikonomides 1976: 140–1; Oikonomides 2002: 994–5.
- 49 Miller 2003.
- 50 Oikonomides 2002: 1042.
- 51 Lemerle *et al.* 1970: nos. 56, 64; Oikonomides 2002: 1043.
- 52 Van Dieten 1975: 208–9; Lemerle 1979a: 230–6.
- 53 Magdalino 1993: 172, 175–7: “Manuel made a significant, positive and conscious contribution to the development of local, ‘grass roots’ feudalism.”
- 54 Van Dieten 1975: 529.
- 55 Magdalino 1993: 217–20, suggests that we have probably underestimated the prevalence of factionalism among the *sebastoi* during Manuel’s reign. For documentation and analysis see Cheynet 1990: 106–10, 413–25.
- 56 Angold 1997: 177.
- 57 Angold 1997: 307–10.
- 58 Stephenson 2000: 279–81, 305–12.

CHAPTER THREE

MONEY, COINS AND THE ECONOMY



Cécile Morrisson

In early medieval Europe some large territories had hardly any money at all, while others relied on barter, ingots or extraneous coins traded as metal and often cut for the purpose. In the former provinces of the Western empire the Roman tradition gradually evolved into several diverging patterns: monometallic silver coinage in Francia, gold and sometimes silver surviving in the Visigothic and Lombard kingdoms in the south.¹ Byzantium was alone in maintaining, albeit with the necessary adaptations, the main characteristics of the late Roman coinage, which was to remain the basic form of money through the nine centuries considered in this volume. Its pivot and cornerstone was the gold *solidus/nomisma*. Created in 312 as the outcome of the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine which checked the third-century crisis of the Roman silver *denarius*, the new system remained relatively stable over some six centuries. It was a multi-metallic and multi-denominational scheme of varying complexity, which adapted well to extremely varied exchanges. Coined money derived from an elaborate financial and fiscal organization that made a powerful contribution to the economic integration of a huge territory, as it had done in the Roman period. We will first outline its evolution, then the conditions of its production (mints and imperial finances) before considering its role in the economy and the variations in monetization.²

COINS AND COINAGE (SIXTH TO FIFTEENTH CENTURIES)

The coinage of the seventh century retained the three traditional gold denominations that had existed since the fifth century: the solidus struck at $\frac{1}{72}$ of a Roman pound,³ the *semissis* and the *tremissis*, which all remained very pure (c. 98 per cent). The silver coinage which had been limited in the sixth century to small issues of ceremonial pieces used for distributions was revived under Herakleios with the creation of the hexagram in 616 whose name was derived from its weight of six *grammata* or *scripula* (scruples), but which declined swiftly at the end of Constantine IV's reign, and became in its turn a "ceremonial" coinage that was struck with solidus dies.⁴

The situation of Byzantine bronze coinage in the mid-seventh century cannot be

understood without a short glance at a major monetary event of the previous period. Anastasius' reform of the bronze coinage (in 498) put an end to a long period of inflation in the smallest denomination, the *nummus*, whose relative value to the gold solidus had fallen from to $\frac{1}{7,200}$ in 445 to $\frac{1}{16,800}$ in 498. Anastasius created a series of multiples of this minute coin (of 0.6–0.5 g, or even 0.2 g), the *follis* of 40 nummi, the half-follis of 20 nummi, the *dekanoummion* and the *pentanoummion*, all bearing their mark of value and the name of the mint, a system which was to last until the eighth century. This innovative reform struck contemporaries enough for it to be related in several sources: Malalas, a Syriac chronicle and Marcellinus Comes.⁵

The stabilization of the small currency however did not last forever. The weight of the follis which had remained constant at 18 g from 512 to 538 and from 542 to 565, following the episode of the large folles dated by regnal years XII–XV, declined progressively until it reached 11–12 g under Maurice and in the first years of Herakleios' reign. This inflation went on continuously during the seventh century and the decline in the purchasing power of the follis is illustrated by the progressive disappearance of its fractions in excavation finds: the pentanoummion, like the dekanoummion, becomes increasingly rare as of the 580s. Finally fractions ceased being struck: the last known examples of pentanoummia are under Constantine IV, with one single example under Constantine V; the dekanoummion disappeared under Constantine V; and the half follis disappeared for good under Theophilos.

The monetary system of the Isaurians and the Macedonians emerged from this process as much simpler, though still pluri-metallic, where each metal, gold, silver and copper was embodied in one denomination only.

Constantinopolitan gold suffered, starting in the 680s, a reduction in its gold content and weight (from 98 per cent and 4.41 g, which prevailed in the period 491–668, to 96 per cent and 4.36 g on average). Only half of the weight reduction was due to the presence in the alloy of metals less valuable and less dense than gold. In terms of the fine gold content, the savings effected were small (2.7 per cent, being 0.12 g saved on 4.32 g), but not negligible. Further slight variations are observed in the eighth and ninth centuries but have not been studied in detail.⁶ They did not affect the overall quality of the metropolitan gold which remained always higher than 90 per cent. Silver was now represented by the emblematic iconoclastic coin, the *miliarèsion* created in 721.

The coin's broad, thin fabric, triple border of dots and use of a figured type with an inscription that covers the whole of one face of the coin may have been copied

Table 3.1 The Byzantine monetary system in the eighth to tenth centuries

Gold*	Silver	Copper
<i>Solidus Nomisma</i> (~ 4.50 g 98% Au)	<i>Miliarèsion</i> (2.27 g to 3.0 g 98% Ag)	<i>Follis</i> (» 14 g to 3 g)
I	12	288
	I	24
		12

* Semisses and tremisses are very rare after 741. The last ones were struck under Basil I (867–86).

from the contemporary Arab dirham as well as inspired by the inscriptions on earlier seals. This iconography is typical of the Iconoclasts' exclusive insistence on the cross with the choice for the inscription around the cross of the invocation of Constantine: *Iesus Christus Nika*, "Jesus Christ Conquers."⁷ The miliaresion was probably intended to compete with the dirham on the political level, by confronting it with a profession of faith by the Christian empire, under the protection of God and the victorious Cross. Although originally ceremonial in nature, since it was only issued in the name of the *meas basileus* in association with his son and heir, the silver coinage soon exceeded this function and, as will be seen, played an active part in tax payments and private transactions as attested in several sources or the archaeological record. It had become the intermediary coinage par excellence, replacing the fractions of the nomisma.

The bronze follis knew two short-lived reinforcements of its weight: one after Herakleios' victory in 629, the other under Constantine IV (d. 685), who restored the earlier Justinianic weight of $\frac{1}{18}$ of a pound (18 g). However, by the end of the seventh century the follis fell to its previous lower weight, due to the need to strike a growing number of coins at a time when copper was in short supply. This is demonstrated by various measures, such as melting down statues, seizing metal from the roofs of churches (as did Constans II in Rome) and occasionally resorting to the use of lead. The haste with which the pieces were struck bears witness to rapid inflation; one finds overstrikes, countermarks and blanks scissored by cutting the large pieces of former times into four. From the mid-eighth century onward the follis was the only and smallest bronze denomination; its mark of value in nummi (M for 40) was now meaningless and was replaced under Theophilos by an inscription in several lines in the reverse field similar to that on the silver coinage. There are only signs of possible variations in the relative values of coins: improvements in the weight of the miliaresion under Theophilos or Basil I and increased value some time in the tenth century, but the fundamental ratio of 1 nomisma = 12 miliaresia = 288 folles, expressed in the *Book of the Prefect*⁸ and the *Palaia Logarike*, occurs also at the end of the eleventh century in the *Glossai nomikai* and other scholia to the *Basilics* and is implied in certain accounts in the *Book of Ceremonies*.⁹

This simple trimetallic structure underwent various transformations in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. Under the emperor John I Tzimiskes (969–76) a bust of Christ was substituted on the bronze coinage for the imperial figure, and the inscription "Jesus Christ, king of those who rule" for the imperial name and title, an innovation which is also noted in the chronicle of Skylitzes. Thus was initiated the abundant series of so-called anonymous folles, which continued until 1092. In the 1030s, fractions of $\frac{2}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the miliaresion were introduced presumably to provide more variety and flexibility for increasing monetary exchanges. More important was the debasement which affected the gold and silver coinages at different dates. Gold experienced a decline following three phases. In the first, from Constantine VII (914–59) to Michael IV (1034–41), a "creeping" alteration increased the proportion of silver in the gold coinage by an annual average of 0.04 per cent. It was during this first phase that Nikephoros II Phokas (d. 969) introduced a lightweight nomisma called the *tetarteron*, which was reduced by one-twelfth ("a small quarter," tetarteron in relation to the full-weight standard nomisma, the *histamenon*).¹⁰ According to Kedrenos and Zonaras, he issued a law ordering that it be preferred, in transactions,

to the older and heavier coin.¹¹ But the manipulation failed since the market adjusted the prices to the inferior value of the coin. His successors continued to issue the lightweight nomisma, even perfectly distinguished in type and fabric from 1005 onward, probably still paying in them partially or totally the state's expenses.

No source alludes to the creeping debasement, which was moderate and less painful than those which followed. In the second phase, from Constantine IX (1042–55) to around 1069 the amount of silver in the alloy now rose at 0.4 per cent per year, probably entailing an increase in money supply in the order of 1 per cent (or an increase by one-third in monetary units over these thirty years). The purity of the nomisma had fallen from *c.* 90 per cent to 70 per cent (21½ to 17 carats).

In the final and dramatic phase from 1071 to 1092, the gold fineness fell rapidly from 35.8 per cent to 10.6 per cent under Alexios I, whose “gold” coinage was in appearance no more than a silver coinage. From this point chronicles refer to the dire straits of imperial finances and the debasement of the nomisma, which was now obvious from the whitish colour of the pieces.¹² Instead of using native unrefined gold, moneyers were resorting to alloying the nomismata with silver mainly derived from existing miliaresia. The process allowed for a much smaller increase in the number of coins struck, and forced repeated alterations: miliaresia having been thrown into the melting pot, in turn new silver coins had to be alloyed with copper, and the subsequent reminting of these debased miliaresia into nomismata resulted in the last histamena with as little as 18 per cent gold.¹³

Once Alexios I had succeeded in regaining control in the Balkans and parts of Asia Minor, notably after his victory at Lebounion in 1091, he staged a major reordering of the coinage, beginning with the coronation of his son John in 1092. As M. Hendy demonstrated in a fundamental study,¹⁴ Alexios managed to restore a gold coinage of high fineness, the *hyperpyron* (“fire refined”), flanked by a third-hyperpyron, the

Table 3.2 The principal stages of gold debasement (914–1092): average values

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>% Gold</i>	<i>% Silver</i>	<i>% Copper</i>	<i>Annual rate and process of debasement</i>
1st phase	Justinian II to Leo VI	695–912	97.3	1.99	0.7	
	Constantine VII	914–59	94.4	4.8	0.7	0.04%
	Michael IV	1034–41	90	7	3	Adding non-purified native gold
2nd phase	Constantine IX	1041–55	87	10.9	2.1	0.4%
	Romanos IV	1068–71	70	24.8	5.2	Adding non-purified native gold
3rd phase	Michael VII	1071–8	58.1	37.1	4.8	1.6%
	Nikephoros III	1078–81	35.8	56.6	7.6	Adding silver and copper
	Alexios I (pre-reform)	1081–92	10.6	72.5	16.9	

Data: Morrisson *et al.* 1985

nomisma aspron trachy or *trikephalon* (“three-headed coin,” also a pun on its value) of white gold, a silver-washed copper (“billon aspron trachy” called *stamenon* in common usage) and two small copper coins, the *tetarteron* and its half, probably called *noumion*. The hyperpyron was not “hyper-pure” but corresponded to the $20\frac{1}{2}$ carats average of debased coins in 1028–56, while its $\frac{1}{3}$, with 30 per cent gold, 60 per cent silver and 10 per cent copper, stemmed from the reminting of the debased “gold” coins of the period 1070–91. Metallurgical constraints, the disappearance of silver in the last phase of the debasement and the paucity of new metal explain the curious standards chosen by the mint authorities. The Komnenian system was just as articulated as the early Byzantine system and clearly adapted to a variegated scale of exchanges.

The hyperpyron remained relatively stable during the twelfth century, sliding only in the 1180s from the initial 87 per cent to 82 per cent in 1204. The electrum (gold-silver) coin was however debased and its value fell to $\frac{1}{4}$, then to $\frac{1}{6}$ hyperpyron, while the stamenon decreased from $\frac{1}{48}$ in 1136 to $\frac{1}{120}$ in 1190 and $\frac{1}{184}$ in 1199.¹⁵ Following 1204 the Byzantine monetary tradition was maintained to various extents by the successor states. Only the empire of Nicaea could issue the whole series of denominations, hyperpyra, trikephala (now pure silver coins worth $\frac{1}{12}$ of the gold one), stamena (now pure copper coins) and a few tetartera.¹⁶

After 1261 the Palaiologoi were the only rulers who pursued the trimetallic system in the Komnenian tradition, but they had to adapt it to the penetration and competition from western coinages by creating western-inspired denominations, the *basilikon* derived from the Venetian silver *doukaton* (ducat, *grosso*), which replaced the trikephalon, and the *politikon* copied from the billon *denier tournois*. The hyperpyron was reduced from around 17 carats (70 per cent) during the Nicaean period to c. 11 carats (45 per cent) in around 1310 and onward. We will see below that this was not only due to the dire straits of imperial finances but also to the differing silver-gold ratios in the East and in the West. Thus in 1353 the Byzantine gold coin created by Constantine terminated its thousand-year history. But the hyperpyron had an afterlife as a money of account whose value could be paid by two big silver coins, called *stavrati* in the sources. These coins, equivalent to twice the weight of fine metal in the last *hyperpyra* at a 1:9 gold:silver ratio, were accompanied by two fractions of one-half and one-quarter, and two copper small coins (*tournesies* and *follaro*), and were struck through the last years of the empire as texts and the recently discovered hoard of Constantine XI demonstrate.¹⁷ Till the end, the Byzantine monetary system proved its wide range and adaptability to the financial and economic context, to which we turn now.

MONEY AND IMPERIAL FINANCES

The main features of monetary production established by Diocletian and Constantine were somewhat altered at the beginning of the seventh century.¹⁸ Minting which depended on the *comes sacrarum largitionum* was now under the *vestiarius*,¹⁹ and the distribution of mints, following the Slav invasion and the Persian war, underwent a major reorganization. Gone were the diocesan mints for bronze (Thessalonika for Macedonia, Nicomedia for Pontus, Cyzicus for Asia, Antioch for Oriens, Alexandria for Egypt: the first three closed in 630, the last two in 610 and 646). Constantinople

only was supplying the eastern themes, which constituted from now on the core of the empire, with gold, silver and copper coins. This centralized minting was supplemented temporarily by Thessalonika where copper striking resumed in the ninth century, and marginally by Cherson where specific cast-bronze coins were issued from 842 to 989 for local use in this Byzantine outpost.

In the western Byzantine possessions, on the contrary, regionalization was the rule. Down to the Arab conquest (695), when it was transferred to Cagliari and continued to issue irregularly through 720, the Carthage mint issued a trimetallic coinage with an abundant gold production dated by regnal or indiction years. These solidi were characterized by a curious globular and thick form which may have been intended as a way of saving the energy required for striking, thus accelerating fabrication.²⁰ In Italy, where Byzantine possessions were isolated from each other by the Lombards, minting was much fragmented. Gold coins, which are rather difficult to identify since wherever they were produced they always bore the uniform inscription CONOB (“refined gold of the Constantinopolitan standard”), were struck in Rome and Ravenna, Naples and Syracuse.

The provincial mints were autonomous and loosely supported by the capital, which explains why from the 690s they diverged more and more from metropolitan standards until they disappeared: Rome in 776, Ravenna in 751, Naples in 842, Syracuse in 879 and its replacement Reggio in 912.²¹ They were forced into debasing gold, beginning in 695 at Syracuse where the fineness fell to c. 80 per cent. This stabilized under Leo III, following his confiscation of the papal revenues of the island, until a second and final devaluation between c. 820 and 886, which turned the nomisma into a coin that was half copper. A comparable debasement affected the gold of the other Italian mints,²² as well as the little Roman silver coins with the emperor’s effigy and the monogram of the popes, which fell from 95 per cent to 30 per cent fineness until they were replaced by *denarii* in Carolingian style in 796.²³ The loss of most Italian possessions, except for Calabria and part of Apulia, resulted in a near complete centralization of imperial mints from the ninth century onward. When Apulia was reconquered in the tenth century, coins were provided from Constantinople and no provincial mint was installed, presumably for fear of providing too much cash to possible rebellious leaders. It is clear that the central mint was able to provide for the needs of a large territory but no information is available on the means used to this end other than scattered mentions in sources of sums from tax collecting or intended for military pay being robbed or seized by enemies or rebels.

In the Komnenian period, after an initial production of reformed coins in several provincial mints, Thessalonika, Philippopolis in Macedonia, Isaccea in Paristrion (“beside the [lower] Danube”), minting seems to have been centralized again in Constantinople, this time in two separate mints (a *moneta imperialis* responsible for precious metal coins and a *moneta publica* for small change), while Thessalonika limited itself to issuing tetartera and noumia destined for the Greek territory.²⁴ Due to the increase in particularism and provincial rebellions during the twelfth century, there appeared mints of a more or less ephemeral nature such as in Trebizond where the Gabrades struck folles at the time of Alexios I, or in Philadelphia where, according to Niketas Choniates, Theodore Mankaphas (1188–90) “struck a silver nomisma and had his name engraved on it.” But no silver coins of this period, only roughly produced trachea bearing the effigy of Theodore, have been found in Asia

Minor, Bulgaria and northern Greece. The most important of these mints was Cyprus, where Isaac Komnenos (1184–91), drawing on the wealth of the island, struck a varied and abundant coinage in all metals except gold.²⁵

In the Palaiologan period the Constantinopolitan mint(s) changed from a directly managed imperial workshop into one which could accept bullion or coins brought by private individuals and was probably farmed out from the mid-fourteenth century onwards.²⁶ That the revenues of the mint were considered important by the state is shown by the claim made in 1258 by Michael VIII to a share in the *kommerkion* and *khrysepsèteion* (gold-smelting and minting installation) of the Constantinople mint. The extreme variety in coin types of copper coinage, characteristic of post-1204 issues, points also to possible regular changes (on an annual or pluri-annual, trimestrial, basis) yielding seignorage profit on forced exchange, like the western *renovationes*. The numerous privy marks on the hyperpyra have also led to similar speculation that cannot yet be proven. Many of them also designated the moneyers in charge.²⁷ Thessalonika, which had resumed minting under the Komnenoi-Doukai, remained active till 1370 and under Manuel II (1391–1425) some poor *torneselli* were struck in Monemvasia or Mistra.²⁸

At this point of our survey it is important to stress that even with this later episode of “mint-farming,” there were never in Byzantium as in the West any concessions of minting rights to local authorities (counts, bishops, religious establishments). Supervision of the mint and its possible profits always belonged to the emperor, who could control the output of new issues, an important element of money supply. Although it would be anachronistic to consider that a monetary policy in the modern meaning of the term could be envisaged, it is clear that the emperor could adapt the quantities struck, their metal content and nominal value, to both his resources in bullion and his financial needs, as clearly stated in the famous passage in Psellos’ *Chronographia* referring to how Michael VII

understood every detail of finance (*synteleia*) exactly: its organisation and management, how much the treasury (*ta dèmosia*) paid to each person and how much each paid back to the treasury; the production of coins and the equilibrium of a balance, excesses and deficiencies of weight, how the touchstone (*khrysitès*) worked; and how many measures of pure metal (*kathara hylè*) each of the pieces of stamped gold contained.²⁹

Bringing together in the same development the budget and the production of coins, including their fineness, highlights the conscious use of debasement as the most common means of multiplying monetary units when metal supply was short. In fact, the three phases of debasement of the tenth and eleventh centuries outlined above can be contextualized in the financial needs of the expanding empire at that time: the first one coincides with the military offensives and reconquests conducted by John I, Nikephoros II and Basil II, the second more with the protracted war of Constantine IX against the Pechenegs than with his lavish expenditure on buildings,³⁰ the third and last one with the dire straits and financial needs caused by the advance of the Seljuks in Asia Minor as already analysed by the contemporary chronicler Nikephoros Bryennios:

He did not grant the highest honours to the most notable . . . the military . . . but

to all those who asked for them. He did the same with what the Romans [i.e. the Byzantines] called *offikia* so that as a consequence, expenditure exceeded revenue by several times. And so, for this reason . . . money was lacking, *the nomisma was debased* and the gifts of money attached . . . to offices were brought to an end. For the influx of money which derived from Asia and which went to supply the treasury ceased because the whole of Asia fell into the possession of the Turks, and since that deriving from Europe also decreased drastically, because of its ill-use by earlier emperors, the imperial treasury found itself in the greatest want of money.³¹

This is obviously a “crisis debasement,” as was also that of the Palaiologan hyperpyron “because of need” likewise lucidly analysed by George Pachymeres:

The *nomisma* was debased because of need. At first, under John [III] Doukas the refined gold of *nomismata* amounted to two-thirds of their weight [i.e. sixteen carats], and this situation continued under his successor. Then, under Michael [VIII], after the recovery of the City, because of the expenses then necessary, not least with regard to the Italians, he [Michael] . . . reduced the measure of gold by a carat, so that the total of twenty-four units [carats] fell to a ratio of fifteen to nine [of alloy]. Later, when he was succeeded [by Andronikos II], it amounted to fourteen [of gold] compared with ten [of alloy], and now [c. 1308] the purity is said to be mixed by half [i.e. twelve of gold compared with twelve of alloy].³²

On the contrary, the first two phases of the eleventh-century debasement can be termed “expansion debasements.” Whatever their immediate cause, they did not have a negative impact on the economy. The increase which their process (adding unrefined gold) permitted in the number of gold coins struck was matched more or less in the long run, from the 950s to the 1060s, by a corresponding increase in the number of monetized transactions due to the territorial, demographic and economic expansion of the time. The evidence, though slight, which points to price stability in the same period excludes that the deficit of the treasury could be the only reason for these earlier debasements. A deficit-driven debasement would have mechanically led to a rise of prices as happened in the late eleventh century and had earlier happened in the third century.³³ On the contrary the earlier two debasements provided an expanding economy with increased monetary exchanges with the necessary instruments for payments whose shortage would have otherwise stalled growth.

MONEY IN THE ECONOMY

This brings us to the behaviour and role of money in the Byzantine economy. The durable and flexible monetary system, which was responsive not only to fiscal but also to commercial needs, together with the enforcement of the elaborate Roman law and practice on property rights, credit, just price and profits, honest measures and transactions,³⁴ provided, at least when peace, political stability and a relative measure of social justice could be assured, the favourable and necessary conditions for some degree of economic development. Until the twelfth century, there is no doubt that Byzantium benefited from a higher monetization of the agrarian economy, a

greater urbanization and consequently a greater division of labour than in the West.³⁵ The role of trade and the standard of living were both obviously superior to those in the West. Byzantium had two comparative advantages: its gold coin, the “dollar of the Middle Ages,”³⁶ and its unified monetary system which reduced the transaction costs in a larger territory than the smaller states of the West. On the basis of the data and analyses collected in the *Economic History of Byzantium*, a model of what the economy may have looked like in the mid-twelfth century was proposed integrating all the relevant factors of fiscality and monetization. This plausible picture, which in my opinion is also valid for the sixth century, gives the following interdependent parameters:

- (a) Agriculture represents 75 per cent of domestic production.
- (b) Monetization of agriculture is 35 per cent.
- (c) Monetization of the non-agricultural sector is 80 per cent.
- (d) The tax burden on total agricultural product is 23 per cent.
- (e) The tax burden on monetized non-agricultural product is 20 per cent.³⁷

This picture of a monetized economy must not however be idealized: even in the “flourishing” sixth or twelfth century there were always areas which, mainly because of their inland location, were relatively demonetized or, at best, knew of a slow, seasonal and viscous circulation of change as in the case of thirteenth-century Epiros,³⁸ or in the other several examples cited by Hendy to bolster his “suggestion of a monetary economy of a very limited kind only,” inferior to that of Anglo-Saxon England.³⁹ We must be wary of subjective generalizations and contrasting examples of monetary exchange drawn from saints’ lives of the eighth to eleventh centuries with those of transactions concluded partly or wholly in kind in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁴⁰ As in all other pre-industrial countries, the level of monetization in the capital and provincial cities on the main sea or land routes was very different from that which obtained in the more remote urban sites and countryside. This explains the recurring problems of payment and exchange encountered by the armies of the Second and the Third Crusades, when, according to Odo of Deuil, French troops changed a staminum for five deniers in the Balkans, five or six in Asia Minor and for only two at Constantinople, thanks to the agreement that had been concluded with Manuel I, and certainly also to the greater availability of cash in the capital.⁴¹

Levels of monetization varied according to a hierarchy reflecting that of incomes and social status, and numerous examples can be produced from texts, hoards and excavation evidence.⁴² Contemporary texts like the twelfth-century satire of Ptocho-prodromos contrast the *higoumenos* counting his hyperpyra and the poor monk counting only his beans, unable to buy himself some caviar, if only for a tetarteron, or to give a “follis” (i.e. a stamenon) in alms.⁴³ The Pantokrator Typikon, with its detailed list of salaries (and related cash and food allowances), supplies and coin distributions, provides complete evidence for all known Komnenian denominations from the hyperpyron, the electrum trikephala, *theotokia* or *hagiogeorgata*, the aspra trachea worth $\frac{1}{48}$ of the hyperpyron used for allowances of lesser personnel, down to the tetartera and noumia distributed to the fifty patients for their daily refreshments or to the poor on the commemorations of the imperial founders.⁴⁴ Similarly Badoer mentions the silver *stavrati* and *duchatelli*, the latter paid to porters carrying or

transporting goods to and from the dockyards and Badoer's merchant house and a small copper denomination called *tornexe* which he reckons at $\frac{1}{8}$ carat, that is $\frac{1}{192}$ of the hyperpyron and $\frac{1}{384}$ of the *stavrato*.⁴⁵

Several texts however show how one had to pass from one metal to another, whether downward from gold or silver to procure small change for alms or everyday expenses, or upward to pay one's taxes according to the principles of the *Palaia Logarike*, which from Leo III onward demanded that the *kanon* be paid in the superior nomisma once it amounted to more than eight miliaresia (i.e. one nomisma for two-thirds nomisma, two nomismata for one and two-thirds nomismata, etc.), the taxpayer receiving the change (*antistrophe*) in small change (miliaresia or folles).⁴⁶ This implied the ubiquitous presence of moneychangers in squares, fora and streets of every city and temporary markets. Their activity was tightly controlled by the state and their possible wrongdoings (cheating on weight or coins) severely punished.⁴⁷

While gold was the instrument of big payments and among all movable assets, and was the metal hoarded preferentially, silver has left fewer deposits. However, its occasional presence in archaeological stray finds documents its current use. Copper coins, though less hoarded, nevertheless feature in numerous deposits of the late sixth and early seventh centuries related to the penetration of the Slavs in the Balkans. Naturally, they are the most frequently represented in stray finds accumulated on archaeological sites, and their annual frequency, which shows a general dramatic decrease in the period 668–829 or 886 on most sites excavated in the Balkans and Asia Minor, provides a rough index of the de-urbanisation and demonetization of the time. In a few cities or regions, mostly but not all situated near the sea, coins are still found in some numbers: Constantinople in the first instance, Bithynia and Sicily – an exceptional centre of economic resilience in the eighth century – and also Calabria, Albania and Amorion.⁴⁸ The “take off” and secular growth of the Byzantine population and economy from the eighth century onward which accelerated in the tenth century are illustrated not only in the graphs of coin finds from Athens, Corinth and other sites, including rural ones,⁴⁹ but also in those showing the marked increase in the number of gold coins issued, as derived from die-study analysis.⁵⁰ The monetary evidence is one important element in the overall picture derived from archaeology and archival documents which depict the increase in settlements and population, in agricultural investments and surplus productions, in the manufacture of glazed ceramics, silk textiles of all qualities, glass, precious or more common metalwork, all objects of an active trade.

Unsurprisingly, after the sixth century, the eleventh and twelfth centuries are those of the greatest expansion of the Byzantine money in the empire and beyond. *Besantius*, *bisantius*, *besant*, which from the tenth century onward designated in the West the Byzantine coin, had become a common word for any gold coin of the time. The crisis debasement of the period from 1059 to 1092 was forgotten and the Komnenian hyperpyron enjoyed an even wider circulation in Mediterranean trade as evidenced, for example, in Venetian documents of the period.⁵¹ With the Fatimid *dinar* in the East and the Almoravid (*morabitino*) in the West, it was one of the “dollars of the Middle Ages,” an international currency with high intrinsic value and purchasing power,⁵² with a stable quality supported by a powerful economy.⁵³

After 1204 and 1261 the integration of Byzantium into an international market dominated by the Italian merchants led to a complete reversal of the previous

Table 3.3 Roman and Byzantine metrological scale

<i>Pound</i>	<i>Ounce</i>	<i>Solidus/ nomisma</i>	<i>Scruple</i>	<i>Carat or siliqua</i>
<i>Libra/litra</i>	<i>Uncia/unggia</i>		<i>Scripulum/ gramma</i>	<i>Siliqua/kération</i>
1 pound	12	72	288	1728
	1	6	24	144
		1	4	24
			1	6
(» 325 g)	(» 27 g)	(» 4.5 g)	(» 1.12 g)	(» 0.18 g)

situation and division of labour: instead of exporting commodities with a high added value to the West, Byzantium and the eastern Mediterranean at large were now exporting raw materials and agricultural products and importing manufactured products like woollen cloth. In the monetary field, the most important reversal was the “return to gold” in the West when Genoa and Venice struck their *genovino* and gold *ducat*. The latter became the common currency of trade, in place of the hyperpyron and the dinar. That was the outcome of differing gold–silver ratios that brought western silver coins to the East and drove gold to the West, a phenomenon which contributed, together with Byzantium’s financial crisis, to the end of the hyperpyron and Byzantium’s own conversion to silver.⁵⁴ The contrast was now also inverted with what had been the rule in the early period: instead of a large unified monetary market with a wide area of penetration, Byzantium’s restricted territory was now open to and sometimes dominated by western or Turkish currencies at the end of a prestigious and influential history.

NOTES

- 1 Grierson and Blackburn 1986; Spufford 1988.
- 2 In what follows I have often relied on my more detailed assessment, Morrisson 2002.
- 3 For a summary of the Roman metrology scale, see Table 3.3.
- 4 Grierson 1968; Morrisson forthcoming a.
- 5 Commentary and references in Morrisson 1994: III, 243–4.
- 6 See data collected in Morrisson *et al.* 1985.
- 7 The special fonts used here for coins inscriptions were first created by the late Professor Nicolas Oikonomides in 1986 and subsequently enriched by Glenn Ruby (†) and the Publications Department of Dumbarton Oaks (Washington, DC). The author is very grateful to DO for graciously releasing these fonts for use in scholarly publications.
- 8 §3.3, ed. Koder 1991b, 90–1 Οἱ καταλλάτται μὴ διαίρειωσαν τὸ μιλιάρισιον τὸ ἀκίβδηλον τὸν βασιλικὸν ἔχον χαρακτῆρα καὶ μὴ παρακεκομμένον, ἀλλὰ ἰσοτίμως ἀνὰ εἴκοσι καὶ τέσσαρας ὀβολοὺς λαμβανέτωσαν αὐτό. “The money-changers should not distinguish against the unadulterated and not counterfeited miliaresion having the imperial stamp but should accept equally for each one twenty-four obols” (trans. Hendy 1985: 253). Koder understands παρακεκομμένον as “beschnitten,” an allusion to the clipping practices denounced in other paragraphs of the *Book of the Eparch*, though with different words (3.1: τέμνειν, 10.4: ψαλίζειν). “Obol” is the usual high-brow term for the follis, or in general for the smaller bronze unit.

- 9 References in Grierson 1973.
- 10 Grierson 1973: 31–3, 37–8, 708–10; Hendy 1985: 507–9, with references.
- 11 Kedrenos 1838–9: II, 369; Zonaras 1841–97: III, 507.
- 12 See Hendy 1985: 235
- 13 Morrisson *et al.* 1985 has trace element analyses explaining the processes and references to earlier data.
- 14 Hendy 1969.
- 15 Hendy 1969.
- 16 Hendy 1999.
- 17 Schreiner 1991; Grierson 1999; Morrisson 1996; Bendall 1991.
- 18 For the administrative basis of coinage production, see Hendy 1985: 371–447 and Hendy 1989: IV–VIII.
- 19 Brandes 2002. In 899 the ἀρχὸν τῆς χαράγῃς belonged to the vestiariion while the necessary precious metal was smelted in the χρυσόχειτον that was part of the *eidikon* where is also found the χρυσόσημητής (gold refiner and assayer). See Oikonomides 1972: 315–17.
- 20 Delamare *et al.* 1984.
- 21 Grierson 1973 can be updated for Rome by Rovelli 2001 and Arslan and Morrisson 2002, for Syracuse by Prigent and Morrisson forthcoming.
- 22 Morrisson *et al.* 1983; Prigent and Morrisson forthcoming.
- 23 Morrisson and Barrandon 1988. On Lombard, early Papal and Carolingian coinages in Italy, see Grierson and Blackburn 1986: 55–73, 210, 259–66.
- 24 According to a recent revision of available evidence by Papadopoulou 2007, *contra* Hendy 1999.
- 25 Hendy 1985: 438–9; Bendall and Morrisson 1994.
- 26 Matschke 1997.
- 27 Grierson 1999: 63, 231; Hendy 1999: 112–21. Various estimates of the possible rhythm of these changes have been proposed in several articles by S. Bendall.
- 28 According to the recent identification by Baker 2006.
- 29 Psellos 1926: II, 173. The translation inserted in Morrisson 2002: 917 is faulty.
- 30 Kaplanis 2003.
- 31 Bryennios trans. by Hendy 1985: 235.
- 32 Pachymeres 1984: 540; trans. in Laiou and Morrisson 2007. The figures for debasement given in this text and in Pegolotti compare exactly with the actual values from analyses, see Morrisson 2002: fig. 4.
- 33 For the details of the argument, relying on Fisher’s equation, see Morrisson 1976, a study which was the first to highlight the economic expansion of the eleventh century, later analysed by Harvey 1989, without proper recognizance of the monetary findings.
- 34 See the various contributions on “Legal Aspects of the Economy” and “Economic Thought and Ideology” in Laiou 2002b: 1059–1120, 1123–44.
- 35 For a comparison arguing that the Byzantine empire was the richest part of Europe, and at the upper limits of the European GDP in the twelfth century, see Luiten Van Zanden 2005. See also Milanović 2006.
- 36 A term coined by R. S. Lopez 1951 in the after-war time of inflation and fragmentation of weak European currencies.
- 37 Laiou 2002b: 1146–7. For a comparative assessment, see Goldsmith 1984 and Morrisson 2002: 948–50.
- 38 Laiou 2001b.
- 39 Hendy 1985: 297–304.
- 40 As assembled respectively by Oikonomides 1994 and Saradi 1995a.
- 41 Laiou 2001a (Appendix by C. Morrisson: 193–6).
- 42 For the sixth and seventh centuries see Patlagean 1977: 342–409.
- 43 Ptochoprodromos 1991: 4.5.85–96.
- 44 Gautier 1974.
- 45 Badoer 1956, *passim*; see Morrisson 2001.
- 46 Hendy 1969, 60–1; Hendy 1985: 285–7; Morrisson 1979: 442–3.
- 47 *Book of the Eparch*, 3, s.v. καταλλάκτης, τραπεζίτης; Dagron in Laiou 2002b: 407–12; Morrisson forthcoming c.
- 48 See Morrisson 2002 and Morrisson forthcoming b.

- 49 For graphs of coin finds, see Morrisson 2002: figs 6.1–15 after p. 912.
50 Füeg 2007.
51 Laiou 2001a.
52 A *nomisma* could buy some ten lambs or six sheep, 3 modioi of land (c. 3,000 m²) or 3 modioi of wheat (38 kg). For other references and lists see Morrisson and Cheynet 2002: 808–70. In Venice, a *nomisma* was worth 120 *denarii* in AD 1000, 496 *denarii* in 1196. Even after the creation of the Venetian *grosso* of 12 d, at the end of the twelfth century, the West had no coin with a purchasing power comparable to that of the *bezant* or the *dinar*.
53 Cipolla 1967: 24.
54 Day 2002, with references; Bertelè 1973.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ARMY AND MILITARY LOGISTICS

—♦—
John Haldon

The study of logistics and resource-management has been until very recently, and with very few exceptions, one of the most neglected areas of historical study, whether for the Byzantine or any other pre-modern state formation.¹ Yet it has always been recognized that the outcome of armed conflict is rarely, if ever, determined by the quality of the soldiers and their leaders alone – the degree and nature of the support which makes fighting between relatively complex social-political organizations possible in the first place is crucial. By medieval standards, the East Roman empire up to the twelfth century was well served by an efficient – indeed, ruthless – fiscal and logistical system which maximized the often limited resources at the state's disposal. In many instances, this gave Byzantine armies a material and psychological advantage which often meant the difference between success and failure. It certainly facilitated the survival of both the military and civil administration of the empire in times of adversity.

STRUCTURES

There were important changes in tactical structures over the period from the sixth to the eleventh century, and again from the later eleventh into the twelfth century and beyond. Units of the middle of the sixth century varied considerably in their organization. The older legions and auxiliary forces continued to exist through the third and fourth centuries, divided into *alae* of cavalry and *cohortes* of infantry, nominally of 500 and 1,000 men respectively; although under Constantine I (d. 337), new infantry units called *auxilia* often replaced these *cohortes*. Newer legions, numbering 1,000–1,500, had also been created during the second and third centuries, and this number seems also to have applied to the original legions by the fourth century. Apart from these were units called *vexillationes*, originally detachments from various units formed for a particular reason during the period c. AD 150–250, which had been turned into permanent units in their own right. This term, vexillation, was applied in the fourth century to most of the new cavalry units recruited at that time. Although some of these technical differences survived into the sixth century, the general term for most units was by then *numerus* or, its

Greek equivalent, *arithmos* or *tagma*, which simply meant “unit” or “number (of soldiers).”

Byzantine tactics and strategy had to adapt quickly to the situation following the Arab conquests in the middle of the seventh century. While infantry continued to be needed, and played an important part in many campaigns, their value appears slowly to have declined, to some extent reflecting social factors, since they were drawn mostly from the poorest of the provincial soldiery. The development of infantry tactics after the period of the first Islamic conquests, along with the higher profile of mounted warfare, therefore, reflected the strategic situation in which the empire found itself. During the period from the later seventh to the ninth or early tenth century, the differences which once existed between the different types of infantry and cavalry were subject to a general levelling out of the different arms, into light cavalry and infantry. Only the imperial field troops or *tagmata* at Constantinople seem to have provided a heavy cavalry force, while local officers in the provinces established field units and armed them as each specific occasion required. The sizes of units on the battlefield varied according to tactical need: there seems to have been no fixed number for the different formations, with figures recommended for the smallest infantry units, the *banda*, for example, ranging from as few as 150 to as many as 400. Several *tourmai* could appear on campaign as a single large division, for example, or vice versa. Most military commands had two or three divisions or *tourmai*, but this does not mean that they were the same size or could muster the same number of soldiers. The provincial armies were organized into what we would refer to as divisions, brigades and regiments – *tourmai*, *drouggoi* and *banda*. Probably from the fiscal reforms of Nikephoros I (by which time the *themata* as fiscal-military regions were established), the *bandon* and the *tourma* were also subdistricts in the *thema*, or military region. Each *tourma* had a headquarters or base in a fortified town or fortress. Each *bandon* was identified with a particular locality from which its soldiers were recruited. Each *tourmarches*, or commander of a *tourma*, was an important figure in the military administration of his theme, responsible for the fortresses and strongpoints in his district, as well as for the safety of the local population and their goods and chattels. His most important responsibility before the middle of the tenth century, however, was dealing with raids into his territory and informing his superiors of enemy movements.

During the course of the tenth century the army evolved a much more offensive tactical structure, the main causes being the need to recruit more professional soldiers, and the need to operate effectively on campaigns which demanded more than the seasonally available theme armies. The main changes were the introduction of a corps of heavy cavalry armed with lances and maces, which could operate effectively alongside infantry, and which substantially enhanced the aggressive power of the Byzantine cavalry, together with the revival of a corps of disciplined, effective heavy infantry, able to stand firm in the line of battle, confront enemy infantry and cavalry, march long distances and function as garrison troops away from their home territory on a permanent basis. At the same time, the army leadership developed new battlefield tactics, so that commanders had a flexible yet hard-hitting force at their disposal which could respond appropriately to a range of different situations.

The remarkable successes achieved by Byzantine armies in the second half of the tenth century in particular, under a series of very able commanders, and described

in the historical accounts of the period, corroborate the evidence of the tactical treatises.² Infantry became once more a key element in the army, in terms of both numbers and tactics, a clear contrast to the situation in the preceding centuries. The new tactics were embodied in a new formation, in which infantry and cavalry worked together, essentially a hollow square or rectangle, depending on the terrain, designed to cope with encircling movements from hostile cavalry, as a refuge for Byzantine mounted units when forced to retreat, and as a means of strengthening infantry cohesiveness and morale. Infantry were no longer drawn up in a deep line with a largely defensive role, but actively integrated into the offensive heavy cavalry tactics of the period. And a very important aspect of the change was a focus on the recruitment of good infantry from warlike peoples within the empire, especially Armenians.

New formations of heavy cavalry appear. Known as *kataphraktoi* or *klibanophoroi*, they were relatively few in number (due to their cost), and were the elite strike force in each field army, drawn up in a broad-nosed wedge with their only function to smash through the enemy heavy cavalry or infantry line, disrupt its formation, and open it up to permit supporting horse and foot-soldiers to exploit the situation. Contemporary writers, both Byzantine and Arab, comment on the effects of this formation on their foes. The imperial armies achieved a powerful reputation, to the extent that by the 1030s the mere threat of an imperial army marching into northern Syria was enough to keep the local Muslim emirs in check. Yet while these successes were the result of a combination of good organization and logistics, intelligent tactics, well-armed, trained and disciplined soldiers, and good morale, the key always remained the competence and effectiveness of the general in command. An army is only as good as its leadership, and although tactical order and training certainly gave Byzantine armies through much of the empire's history an obvious advantage, incompetent officers were the bane of the system: dependence on the charisma and intelligence of its leaders was one of the most significant in-built weaknesses of the imperial military system at the tactical level. During the middle of the eleventh century, and in a context of short-sighted strategic planning and internal political conflict, this produced serious problems and led to the erosion of the effectiveness of both the field armies and the provincial defences. Michael Attaleiates, a contemporary of the Manzikert campaign who travelled with the imperial entourage, paints a sad picture of the state of the thematic levy raised for the campaign of 1071, remarking that the provincial troops were entirely unfitted for warfare – they had been neither mustered nor paid or supplied with their traditional provisions for many years. Yet his account of the campaigns of the dynamic emperor Romanos IV (1068–71) shows that the imperial armies still possessed order, discipline and cohesion when properly led.

Byzantine armies in this period were a mixture of regular mercenary units from the different parts of the empire, the older thematic soldiers and foreign units. The growing political and cultural influence of the world around Byzantium, which had been held at bay for so long, meant that the empire was becoming increasingly integrated into the tactical world of the lands around it. Byzantine order and discipline remained a significant element in the empire's armies, but the latter were a polyglot and multi-ethnic mixture of Seljuk, Pecheneg and Cuman horse archers, Norman, German and Frankish knights, Bulgarian and Anatolian light infantry,

Georgians and Alans from the Caucasus, and imperial guards recruited from outside the empire (Varangians, for example, from the 1070s chiefly made up of Anglo-Saxons who had left recently conquered Norman England). The Byzantine army was no longer, strictly speaking, Byzantine.

In spite of efforts under the emperors of the Komnenian dynasty, many indigenous units were re-equipped and trained in western style, so that the result was an army no different from any other mercenary army in its tactics and formations. The difference lay in the superior order and tactical dispositions of the imperial troops, when these were properly exploited by an able commanding officer, and this is still evident on occasion in the later years of the twelfth century. By the middle of the thirteenth century, and following the fall of Constantinople to the armies of the Fourth Crusade, tactics, armour and weaponry were no different from those of the surrounding cultures and states with which the Byzantines were alternately at peace and war.

STRATEGY

Strategic dispositions evolved to meet the needs of the moment. In the sixth century and up to the period of the Arab invasions the units established in garrisons along and behind the frontier were called *limitanei*, frontier soldiers, usually comprised of the older legions and auxiliary regiments, while the field armies were largely formed of more recently established units, and located across the provinces, often well behind the frontier, in strategic bases from which they could meet any incursions into Roman territory. One result of the loss of the eastern and Danubian provinces during the seventh century was the disappearance of the former and the withdrawal into Asia Minor of the latter, where they settled down to form what came to be referred to from the time of Nikephoros I as *themata*, “themes,” a term reflecting their community-based fiscal basis. In the later tenth century new and much smaller territories under *doukes*, “dukes,” grew up along both the eastern and northern frontiers, serving both as a zone of defence and as a springboard for further advances. At the same time, the old themes became increasingly demilitarized with the growth in the use of mercenaries. The collapse of the later eleventh century brought with it a need to reorganize, and although the changes wrought by the Komnenoi produced a series of new *themata* and new frontiers in Asia Minor, the basic principles of eleventh-century strategy – an in-depth defence based in fortresses and similar strongpoints supported by a single imperial field force based in and around Constantinople – were maintained. The last two centuries of the empire, from the 1250s until 1453, saw no substantial change, although numbers were very much reduced as the empire’s resources shrank.

FOOD AND TRANSPORT

The ability of the government to supply and maintain its armies fluctuated with its political and economic fortunes, but until the twelfth century a system of logistical support existed which can be traced quite clearly back into the fifth and fourth centuries. Until the middle of the seventh century, clothing, mounts and weapons for the army were provided by a combination of taxation or levy in kind (for example, certain items of clothing and boots appear to have been raised in this way), and

through state manufactories. Of the latter, the arms factories were among the most important. Weapons and clothing were, by the later sixth century, bought by soldiers, either directly or through the regimental actuary, with a cash allowance issued for the purpose. Maurice (582–602) tried to reform this by returning to the older system of issuing such materials in kind, but it is unclear if he was successful. Horses were provided partly by levy, partly through purchase at fixed prices. Imperial studfarms contributed a proportion of the mounts required, but again, cannot have provided for all mounted units. The so-called *Strategikon* of Maurice, composed at the end of the sixth century, advises generals to establish winter quarters in areas where such supplies will be readily available for purchase, or to make it possible for traders and others to reach the army in order to provide the required provisions and equipment.³ Iron ore, charcoal and wood were also provided by levy, sometimes remitted from the tax-burden of the area or community in question, sometimes raised through compulsory impositions upon certain categories of the population.⁴

The cost of moving all these supplies was considerable. Transportation was cheapest by sea, but this was rarely relevant to inland campaigns, either on the eastern front or in the Balkans. Usually, the public post (*cursus publicus*) was employed in either its “fast” (using horses and mules) or “slow” versions (using oxen) to transport materials not directly connected with the army.⁵ The army itself provided guards and transport for weapons, as laid down in Justinian’s regulations of the middle of the sixth century, although it should be stressed that we have no way of knowing to what extent these prescriptions were actually followed.⁶

Field armies on campaign were provided with their supplies by a complicated process involving liaison between local and central fiscal departments. According to the sixth-century regulations preserved in the legislation of Justinian, the provincial officials are to be given advance notice of the army’s requirements in foodstuffs and other goods, which are to be deposited at named sites along the route of march. The materials, food supplies and other requirements demanded by the provincial authorities on behalf of the central government were referred to as *embole*, a term which meant simply that part of the regular tax assessment owed by each taxpayer (whether an estate, an individual peasant freeholder, or whatever) not paid in coin.⁷ Exact records of the produce supplied by the taxpayers as *embole* were to be kept and reckoned up against the annual tax owed in this form; if more supplies were provided than were due in tax, then the extra was to be supplied by the taxpayers, but this was then to be paid for, at a fixed rate established by the appropriate state officials, out of the cash revenues collected in the regular yearly assessment from that particular province. This process was referred to as a *coemptio* in Latin, or *synone* in Greek, effectively a compulsory purchase. If the provincial treasuries in question had insufficient local cash revenues left over to pay for these extra supplies, then they were to be paid for instead either from the general bank of the praetorian prefecture, in other words, the *coemptio* was still applied; or they were to be collected anyway and then their value (at the prices fixed by the state) deducted from the following year’s assessment in kind.⁸

A very similar process operated from the ninth and tenth centuries, as is shown in a treatise on military expeditions compiled by the *magistros* Leo Katakylas, describing very probably the campaign practice of the emperor Basil I. Here it is noted that

the *protonotarios* of each *thema* through which the imperial force passes must provide certain supplies in kind from the *aerikon* (the cash resources of the province), and the *synone*, which by this time no longer meant a compulsory purchase, but was an equivalent for the older *embole*, that portion of the state's revenues collected in kind rather than in cash. If this was not sufficient, then the *protonotarios* should obtain the necessary produce from the *eidikon*, the central treasury at Constantinople which dealt with tax in kind and with imperial reserves.

The thematic *protonotarios* was to be informed in advance as to the army's requirements, which were to be provided from the land tax in kind and the cash revenues of the *thema* and stored at appropriate points along the route of march. An exact account of the supplies was to be kept, so that (where the thematic taxpayers provided more than their yearly assessment demands) the amount could be deducted (from the assessment for the following year). Both passages note that, where supplies could not be paid for out of the local fiscal revenues, the cash – or the supplies: the text does not specify which, although the former would be far more likely – is to be taken from the bureau of the *eidikon*, just as in the sixth century the cash was taken from the general bank of the prefecture. The second text notes that the final accounts are worked out, after the expedition has been stood down, in the *eidikon*.⁹

It is clear from these texts that the basic mechanism in the sixth and in the ninth and tenth centuries was effectively the same. The *protonotarios* was now the link between the provincial thematic fiscal administration and the central government. He belonged to the department of the *sakellion*; but he worked with the *eidikon*, as well as with local officials of the department of the *genikon*, responsible for the general land tax and related state demands.¹⁰ The *protonotarios* replaced earlier officials, *eparchai* or prefects, who were the successors of the ad hoc praetorian prefects referred to already, responsible for liaising between the army and its demands, on the one hand, and the provincial fiscal officials in whose area the army was operating, on the other.¹¹

Fragments of several tenth-century archival collections dealing with expeditions in 910–11, 935 and 949, referred to above, can supplement this basic information. They list troops, vessels, supplies and armaments,¹² and provide a wealth of information about the organization of an expedition. It is clear that in addition to the regular supplies to be provided by the thematic *protonotarioi*, extra supplies in foodstuffs and in kind had to be raised. Large amounts of coined gold and silver were required, not only for the campaign pay and largesse issued to the soldiers, but also for the fitting out of the ships involved. This was supplied until the eleventh century through the *eidikon* and from other revenue-producing departments through the *sakellarios*, the empire's chief treasury official, whose supervisory capacity permitted him to exercise general control over expenditures. At Constantinople, several departments had associated with them warehouses or storehouses, workshops and the like: the evidence for the expedition of 949, for example, shows that the *eidikon* had a storehouse which maintained supplies of raw materials, including iron ore,¹³ lead and a range of other items for the equipping of both land forces and warships; similarly the imperial *vestiariion* stored items of naval equipment, clothing and even cooking utensils. In addition, and continuing the practice established during the late Roman period, the public post was employed in the movement of supplies and material for the army. Although little is known in detail of its functioning in the period after the

sixth century, it acted essentially as a state transportation system operating both a rapid courier as well as a (probably quite limited) slower transport service, supported by its own stock-breeding ranches and with a complex administration based at Constantinople and in the provinces.¹⁴

The themes' *protonotarioi* were made responsible for raising additional supplies for the expedition, working with officials of the *genikon*, a point supported by evidence from the earlier ninth century. In certain circumstances, imperial officials were despatched to the *themata* to assist in collecting and transporting the supplies: an imperial officer, described simply as "a certain *basilikos*," was sent to the Anatolikon region in 910/11 to raise barley, biscuit, corn and flour for the Kibyrrhaiot forces. Specific directions were given for the route by which it was to be transported. After the changes introduced during the later eleventh century, especially by Alexios I, the provisioning of the fleet was placed under the supervision of the *megas doux* and the *megas domestikos*. As well as his purely military attributes, the former was also given a substantial administrative function, insofar as the coastal regions of certain provinces, in particular Hellas-Peloponnesos (of which the *megas doux* was the general governor anyway), were organized into districts or *oria*, serving probably to provide the resources, manpower and supplies for the fleet. A similar procedure to that of 949 was probably followed in most such cases, as in 1169, for example, when a naval expedition to Damietta in Egypt was provided with three months' supplies from the provinces.¹⁵

RAW MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

The provision of raw materials for weapons had been achieved in the late Roman period through the regular taxation (iron ore, for example, formed part of the *syn-teleia*, the tax-burden of those who extracted ore in the Taurus mountain region) together with compulsory levies in wood and other materials. The tenth- and eleventh-century evidence suggests that a similar combination of levies (wood, charcoal, etc.) and purchases (or compulsory purchases) was operated, as noted above. But in contrast to the later Roman arrangements, the production of different types of weapon was commissioned and passed on to provincial craftsmen and manufacturers of items such as spears, arrows, bows, shields and so forth. After the period of the initial Arab conquests in the 630s and 640s, most of the late Roman workshops were outside the imperial frontier; of those that remained within the state – at Sardis, Nicomedia, Adrianople, Caesarea, Thessalonika – virtually nothing is known, although there is very slight evidence that production may have been resumed at Caesarea.¹⁶ Arms workshops continued to exist in Constantinople; but whether the official in charge of these (*archon tou armamentou*) oversaw the provincial establishments as well as these is unclear.¹⁷ There is some evidence that state officials known as *kommerkiarioi*, originally responsible only for the import or redistribution of luxury goods, in particular silks, may have been given some responsibilities, on an interim basis, for the commissioning of weapons and related military requirements during the second half of the seventh century: there is a degree of coincidence between evidence for certain military expeditions and the activities of these officials in areas from which logistical support might be drawn, either overland or by sea. But the exact nature of their role remains unresolved.¹⁸

Eighth-century evidence suggests that some provincial soldiers were responsible for obtaining and providing their own weapons and armour, hence signalling the abandonment of the state monopoly which had been introduced by Justinian. There is some evidence in inscriptions as well as texts for provincial armourers and weapon-makers. By the ninth century, the provincial military officers, through their own officials, were commissioned with raising the necessary extra weapons and equipment, which was done by applying compulsory levies on provincial craftsmen and artisans.¹⁹ The government departments of the *eidikon* and the *vestiarion* appear as major repositories and suppliers of a whole range of requirements for the fleet and the army, alongside the armouries established in Constantinople itself.²⁰

LIVESTOCK

Supplying pack animals, cavalry mounts and draught animals such as oxen for the army was a major expense and a major concern of the government. Cavalry horses were provided in the later Roman period from imperial studfarms, as were pack animals, although requisitions from private sources were also made. After the sixth century, imperial estates for cavalry horses as well as animals for the imperial post and for the army's supply-train continued to be maintained; the best known was that at Malagina in north-west Anatolia. The *metata*, or stock-raising ranches, of the provinces of Asia and Phrygia are the most prominent in the middle Byzantine period, but certainly existed long before this: the ranch in Phrygia was situated in the triangle formed by the small towns of Synnada, Dokimon and Polybotos. There were also *metata* in Lydia. As a result of territorial losses, these ranches had moved by the middle of the twelfth century, mostly to Europe. Malagina still served as an imperial base after the 1140s, when it was recovered by Manuel I; but the main ranches and bases were in the Balkans, in the *themata* of Dyrrhachion, Berroia, Hellas-Peloponnesos and Nikopolis. They continued in the charge of the *chartoularios*, now entitled the *megas chartoularios* (originally a subordinate of the *logothetes ton agelon*, "of the herds"); and they were referred to no longer as *aplektā* or *metata*, but as *chartoularata*. Their function was unchanged.²¹

Close cooperation between the imperial official in charge of these establishments, the military logothete (responsible for military expenditures and accounts), the *komes tou stablou* (in charge of the imperial stables) and his representatives at Malagina, and other fiscal departments, was essential. Although the titles of the officials involved, and the relationships between their various departments within the imperial administration, changed over time, particularly from the reign of Alexios I, the fundamentals of this system remained the same until the end of the twelfth century. In the sixth century there had also been military stock-raising estates in Thrace as well as eastern Asia Minor; and imperial studfarms in Cappadocia had raised racehorses, and may have specialized in other types of animal also. The Villa Palmati, near Tyana, was well known in this respect, as was the estate of Hermogenes in the Pontos, but a wide variety of different sources was exploited. If the imperial household was involved, then all the main state departments, the leading civil and military officers, the metropolitanates and the monastic houses of the empire had to provide a certain number of mules or other pack animals to transport the household and its requirements. For regular non-imperial campaigns the main sources for the

army were the imperial studfarms; requisitions from the estates of the Church and from secular landholders; and the soldiers themselves. In the late Roman period, horses were provided, or at least made available for purchase using special grants issued for the purpose. During the middle Byzantine period in the provinces the thematic soldiers were often supposed to provide their own horses, although this sometimes caused problems. Tagmatic units seem generally to have had their mounts provided for them, or were required to purchase their requirements on the market using grants incorporated in their salaries and campaign payments.²²

The supply of horses for the cavalry would also need to cater for remounts, of course. The ratio of remounts to soldiers in the late Roman and Byzantine army is difficult to assess. The rate of replacement of horses for the public post was set at 25 per cent per annum in the fourth century. It was probably much lower for a field army on the move; but a rate of replacement of 10 per cent would only barely cover average rates of loss. According to the late sixth- or early seventh-century *Strategikon*, the remounts which accompanied cavalry units into battle numbered only some 5–6 per cent of the total. But the same text also notes that remounts should be held back at the base camp, with the rest of the baggage train, so that this was clearly a minimum provision for the battlefield only. Similar provisions are mentioned in an independent text, the *Praecepta* of Nikephoros. The tenth-century treatise on imperial military expeditions suggests a remount stock of about 20 per cent – 100 animals for 482. Two of the later tenth-century treatises imply a remount rate for advance units and the main lancer division (as opposed to mounted archer units) of 1:1. Yet the *Praecepta* of Nikephoros also specifies that not too many spare horses should be taken along with raiding parties, lest they unnecessarily encumber the raid. Similarly, in the report sent by Herakleios to Constantinople of his campaign in 627–8, mention is made of the cavalry being ordered by the emperor to leave their spare horses in the houses of Kanzak, near which he had established his main base, and that each soldier should retain only one horse. The implication is that at least one spare animal per soldier was available.²³

THE BAGGAGE TRAIN

Armies were usually accompanied by a supply-train, the *touldon*. The late tenth-century treatise on campaign organization stipulates a basic supply of twenty-four days' rations of barley for the horses, which according to other sources was similarly to be put aside by the thematic *protonotarios* for collection by the army en route;²⁴ historians' accounts of campaigns frequently mention the baggage-train or the supplies and fodder it carried.²⁵ Not all these supplies were derived from the regular land tax, however: depending on the local circumstances, much of it must also have been raised through compulsory exactions, as in the late Roman period. This was certainly the case when the emperor was present.²⁶ Similarly, the *protonotarioi* of the affected themes had to provide supplies that could be transported by wagon or mule to the army on enemy territory, if the surrounding districts had been devastated. But smaller units clearly foraged for their own fodder and supplies, whether in enemy territory or on Roman soil, which must have caused some hardship to the communities affected; while once on hostile terrain the commander must either have arranged to keep his supply-lines open by detaching small units to hold key passes

and roads,²⁷ or let the army forage for all its requirements once the supplies had run out.²⁸ Some incidental evidence from the contemporary historians illustrates these methods in operation.

The burden of supporting soldiers passing through on campaign had always been onerous, as a number of sources from the later Roman period through to the twelfth century testify. This was not just because of the demands made by the army on local productive capacity, but reflected also the fact that state intervention into local exchange relations on such a large scale could adversely affect the economic equilibrium of an area. In the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries there is very clear evidence of the distortion of prices by these means: either through the state's fixing artificially low prices for the sale of produce to the army, thus harming the producers; or by sudden heavy demand driving prices, for non-state purchasers, upwards. Even more telling is the evidence of the sixth-century legislation on the situation in Thrace and the combined effects of barbarian inroads and military supply demands on the economy of the region. The establishment of the *quaestura exercitus* was aimed at resolving one element of this problem, for through the administrative linkage between the Aegean islands and coastal regions concerned with the Danube zone the troops in that theatre could be supplied from relatively wealthy productive areas by sea and river transport.

But the problem remained acute enough for Maurice to attempt to have his armies winter on the non-Roman side of the river in 593 and 602.²⁹ Leo VI advised generals to carry sufficient supplies with the army and to forage on enemy territory rather than prey upon the citizens of the empire;³⁰ the need to avoid harming the provincials by permitting the army to forage and extract supplies without proper administrative controls is often repeated, although even where such controls were established, the presence of a large force of soldiers, their animals and their followers will rarely have been welcome.³¹ The provincial administrators do seem to have tried to minimize the effects of passing military forces, and one should not exaggerate the problem. But several letters of the ninth and tenth centuries appeal to state officials against the burden imposed upon them, or their clients, through the imposition of *mitaton* (the billeting of troops) and related expenses; these are on several occasions related explicitly to the effects of the presence of soldiers on campaign. Niketas Choniates later wrote that at times during the later years of Manuel I the Roman lands were "ravaged by our own soldiers." And while we must allow for some degree of hyperbole on the part of the more privileged and literate elements in society, some of the complaints are on behalf of those less fortunate than the writers themselves.³²

The pattern of catering for expeditionary forces changed very little between the later tenth and later twelfth centuries. Provincial officials were, as before, told of the necessary requirements, which had to be prepared in advance ready for the army to collect; and supplies provided were set against the annual tax demand for the region in question. But one important development does bring about some changes. For from the early eleventh century, if not already a little earlier, the majority of the soldiers were no longer stood down for much of the year and called up only when a major expedition was planned or when an attack threatened. This system, which had evolved from the middle of the seventh century, had the obvious advantage – from the standpoint of the management and distribution of resources – that soldiers thus supported themselves to a substantial extent, and constituted only a limited burden

on the taxpayers. With the change to an aggressive mercenary army, soldiers must have been present all year round in many regions, needing to be fed, housed, their animals catered for, and so on, throughout the year.

We are fortunate to possess a number of imperial grants of exemption for the tenth century and beyond, which give some idea of what sorts of demands were made. The burdens, in themselves, had existed from Roman times and were still found in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: the imposition of billeting and feeding soldiers and officers, grinding corn and baking bread, and providing extra supplies for units passing through or based in a district, providing craftsmen and artisans for public and military works, burning charcoal, and providing labour for the maintenance or construction of roads and bridges.³³ By the tenth century, if not already long before, a group of new impositions had evolved, including the provision or fabrication of weapons and items of military equipment, as we have seen, a reflection of the breakdown of the late Roman system of *fabricae* or state arms factories. For other materials, cash could be issued from the central bureaux, especially the *eidikon*, with which to purchase iron or similar requirements from provincial sources for the production of specialized items, for example for naval construction.

During the eleventh century, a number of landlords, both lay and monastic, succeeded in obtaining exemptions for their estates from the levy of weapons and other supplies. Furthermore, since units of mercenary or tagmatic soldiers were often based permanently in a particular location through the winter season – *eis paracheimasia* as it is called in the sources – such demands seem to have occurred both more frequently and on a more arbitrary basis, according to the needs of individual units and their commanders.³⁴ Contemporaries were perfectly aware of these burdens: in the eleventh century the intellectual and courtier Michael Psellos writes a letter about the weight of the burden of state exactions in the form of demands for livestock, probably horses, which were needed when the army was present; and an anonymous author remarks on the burden imposed upon the taxpayers when the imperial cortège and troops pass through a region.³⁵

In the period before the changes of the later tenth century, it is likely that the overall burden on the rural population of the provinces was fairly evenly distributed, and that, although the transit of imperial forces did involve unusually heavy demands on the communities closest to the routes used by military detachments, such demands were neither frequent nor regular, the more so since the emperors seem to have maximized their use of the system of base-camps or *aplekta* as points for the concentration of smaller forces from a wide area. Thus very large armies marching across imperial territory will have been comparatively unusual – and hence also the much more devastating consequences when civil strife broke out (as in the civil war between Michael II and Thomas the Slav in the early 820s, for example).

The presence of many more full-time units, whether indigenous or foreign, needing supplies, fodder, housing and other necessities throughout the winter and possibly all year round, and who could not draw upon their families and their own resources, must have considerably increased the overall burden on the rural populations. The result was, in effect, the extension of the traditional system for maintaining armies on campaign, which had been in operation from late Roman times, but which had affected most provinces only occasionally,³⁶ into the standard or regular means of maintaining all the imperial forces. In contrast to the general situation in

the ninth and earlier years of the tenth century, the bulk of the provincial soldiery could no longer be said to support itself over the greater part of the year. Furthermore, unlike the older thematic “militia,” the full-time soldiers generally had no common interest with the provincials who supported them. Exemptions, particularly those granted to monastic foundations, are instructive and show that the number of groups of foreign mercenaries, for example, who were directly dependent upon the local population increases very sharply from the 1040s.³⁷ But the process was already under way from the middle of the tenth century. Thus the most costly units and a greater proportion of the armies came to be maintained at the direct expense of a rural or sometimes urban population. There were probably substantial regional variations, evidence for which is lacking, so that some districts, especially those from which the imperial forces conducted operations over several seasons, will have been more drastically affected than others. The rapacity of imperial officials in extracting the resources to maintain the soldiers was notorious; and even though many landlords, particularly those with access to imperial patronage, attempted to free themselves from such impositions, the needs and demands of the local military meant that such privileges were often ignored.³⁸

THE KOMNENOI AND BEYOND

The basic organization of military expeditions and campaigns in the eleventh century remained the same as in the preceding centuries. The information for the process of supplying and maintaining forces in the field to be found in the details of some eleventh-century campaigns, including the campaigns of Romanos IV in 1068 and 1071, and in the preparations made by Alexios I to deal with the passage through imperial territory in the Balkans of the Crusader armies, show that the same principles operated, the same pattern of collection, concentration and redistribution of military provisions was maintained. And although the administrative departments responsible had evolved or changed somewhat from the period before Alexios I, the same arrangements were still in place for the campaign mounted by Manuel I which ended in defeat at Myriokephalon in 1176. The imperial *armamenta* in Constantinople continued to function as weapons-repositories (along with the imperial *vestiarion* and the bureau of the *eidikon*); they could clearly contain substantial stores, for when he was faced by the rebel army of Leo Tornikes at Constantinople in 1047, the emperor Constantine IX was able to equip and arm a substantial scratch force from this source.³⁹

One important change which is worth noting involved an expansion of the authority of the thematic *kritai*, “judges,” civil officials seconded from Constantinople whose authority grew in the older *themata* in proportion to the decline in the importance of the thematic armies and their *strategoi*, and a corresponding reduction of the importance of the *protonotarioi*, a process which reflects the efforts made by the central government from the later tenth and into the eleventh century to extend the judicial authority of its fiscal departments, in order to retain control over taxable resources.⁴⁰

The enormous demands made upon the ordinary population of the empire when a military expedition was undertaken required an administrative structure which could deal with all facets of the armies’ needs, whether in terms of raising and

equipping new recruits or in respect of supplying the vast number of men, horses, mules and other animals which an army on the march needed. But it is evident that the basic structures which had evolved by the late Roman period retained their relevance even as they continued to evolve in response to the changed contexts, fiscal needs and political emphases of the period after the sixth century.

NOTES

- 1 See e.g. Engels 1978; Roth 1999; Haldon 2005.
- 2 See Sullivan in this volume.
- 3 See Sullivan in this volume.
- 4 There was a system of yearly allowances to provide for weapons: Haldon 1984: 117f.; Jones 1964: 834–9.
- 5 On which see Jones 1964: 830–4; Henty 1985: 602ff.
- 6 Transport of arms and weapons: Haldon 1984: 114 and notes.
- 7 See Morrisson in this volume.
- 8 Haldon 1994.
- 9 See Const. Porph., *Three treatises*: (B) 101–6; (C) 347–58.
- 10 See Oikonomides 1972: 313, 315; Haldon 1990: 167 and 236; 168 and 236, on the various fiscal departments.
- 11 For the origins of the *protonotarioi*, see Haldon 1990, 1997: c. 5.
- 12 Haldon 2000.
- 13 Haldon 1984: 593–4; Westerink 1973: no. 5, 19ff.; Edmondson 1989; Vryonis 1962.
- 14 The *dromos* was a major element in the state's operations. Originally under the Praetorian Prefects, by the eighth century it was an independent department under its logothete, a high-ranking officer for whom numerous seals survive. See Laurent 1981: 195–243; Oikonomides 1972: 311–12; Henty 1985: 608 and n. 238; Brandes 2002. The operations of the *dromos* were closely associated with those of the *logothetes ton agelon*, in charge of the imperial stud ranches, in particular the *metata* of Asia and Phrygia (Oikonomides 1972: 338; Laurent 1981: 289ff.); Haldon 1990: 161 and 184.
- 15 Haldon 2000: 211, 128f. For the *mezas doux*, see Magdalino 1993: 234–5.
- 16 Haldon 1984: 318ff.
- 17 Haldon 1984: 319–21 with notes 972–7.
- 18 The different points of view in the debate are evaluated in Haldon 1990, 1997: 232–44; and 1993: 15–18.
- 19 For soldiers providing their own armour and weapons: Haldon 1993: 21–3. For the compulsory contracting out of weapons production, see e.g. Haldon 2000: 210–11 and commentary (*strategos* of Thessalonika to provide 200,000 arrows, 3,000 spears and as many shields as he could manage; the *krites* of Hellas to prepare 1,000 spears; the *strategos* of Samos was to obtain cash to pay for the production of nails for the ships).
- 20 See e.g. Haldon 2000: 227ff.; Haldon 1990: (C) 131–5.
- 21 See Magdalino 1992. For some useful comparative material on studs and horse-breeding in general, see Gladitz 1997: 116f., 129ff.
- 22 See on all these issues Haldon 1997.
- 23 Haldon 1999b: 141; see also Haldon 1990: (C) 389–91. For the earlier Roman period: Dixon and Southern 1992: 156–62.
- 24 *Campaign organisation and tactics*: §21.21–3 (302f.); cf. Haldon 1990: (C) 347–52.
- 25 E.g. Attaleiates 1853: 118.4–5; 151.9 (a. 1071). Cf. Leo the Deacon: x, 8 (171.19–21; Eng. trans. in Talbot and Sullivan 2005).
- 26 For the fifth century, see Vegetius: iii, 3; for the tenth century, Const. Porph., *Three treatises*: (C) 557–9.
- 27 *Campaign organisation and tactics*: §21.36–42.
- 28 *Campaign organisation and tactics*: §§21, 32; *Skirmishing*: §16.1.
- 29 See esp. De Jonge 1948; Jones 1964: 629, on the effects of the presence of a large expeditionary force at Edessa in 503 and 504 (while an exception, the example is nevertheless useful in giving some idea of

the problem the presence of a large army created); and 630, for the evidence for price-fixing. For Thrace, see *CIC*: X, 27.10 (a. 491–505). On compulsory purchase and fixed prices, see Haldon 1994. For Maurice's order and the context, see Kaegi 1981: 106–13.

30 Leo, *Taktika*: ix, 1–3; xvii, 36.

31 E.g. Maurice, *Strategikon*: i, 9, in Dennis 1981; Dennis 1984.

32 The wealthy and powerful were most likely to succeed in gaining exemption: cf. a letter of the general Nikêphoros Ouranos to the *krites* of the *Thrakesion* theme appealing for exemption from *mitaton*, which he claimed was crippling his household (Darrouzès 1960: no. 42.241–2); or the letter of the patriarch Nikolaos Mystikos on behalf of the widow of a *drouggarios* of the *Vigla*: Darrouzès 1960: no. 31.120–1. See esp. Nicholas I, *Letters*: nos. 92.10–26; 94.31–40 (extraordinary impositions for the Bulgarian war); 150; 183 (concerning the imposition of military burdens and renewed general imposition of extraordinary levies on church lands and clerics). For Niketas Choniates' remarks, see Choniates: 209.

33 See *CTh*: xi, xvi, 15.18 (laws of 382 and 390); and Harvey 1989: 105–9 for the tenth- and eleventh-century Byzantine equivalents.

34 For the naval arsenal in Constantinople, see Oikonomides 1964.

35 Psellos' letter describes the plight of a widow subject to the *epidosis monoprosonon*: see Sathas 1872–94: v, 363. For the anonymous *Logos nouthetetikos*, see Kekaumenos 1896: 103.33–104.2. In fact, it is probable that Kekaumenos himself wrote the treatise.

36 In the later Roman period the experience of the provinces of Thrace illustrate the effects of a constant military presence, for since they could not afford to supply the troops through the usual system, a permanent *coemptio* or compulsory purchase had to be enforced. See *CIC*: X, 27.2/10.

37 Although this increase may have set in some time before this date, when the first document to list such units which has survived was issued. See Oikonomides 1976: 144.

38 See Harvey 1993: 146.

39 See e.g. for Romanos IV, Attaleiates 1853: 117.1; 126.5; 134.13–14; 140.7–8. For the basic shape of the administration of the state under the Komnenoi, see Magdalino 1993: 228–30. For Constantine IX's recruitment and equipping of an army: Psellos, *Chronographia*: vi, 112 (trans. Sewter 1953: 159). For the role of the *vestiarion* and the *eidikon*, see Const. Porph., *Three treatises*, s.v.; and Haldon 2000: 289ff.

40 See Oikonomides 1972: 344ff., 354–63; Oikonomides 1976: 135–41, 148ff.; and Magdalino 1994.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE STUDY OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Methodological challenges and new directions*



Anthony Kaldellis

In the duration, geographical scope and dynamic complexity of Byzantine society one may find women and children to exemplify every manner of fortune and background, experience and mentality. In the current state of research, all generalization would be premature. The evidence is extensive and not easy to handle. On the textual side, it consists of notices, documents and narratives scattered across centuries, genres, regions and languages. Some of this material is inaccessible and much still untranslated. No one has attempted to assemble it and analyze it. It is hard to imagine what such a study would look like, what it could prove and what methodology it would follow. Historians interested in political and military history have many Byzantine narratives that were written precisely with the goal of informing posterity about those events, yet almost no Byzantine writer set out to inform anyone about the lives of women and children. Handling the evidence becomes methodologically complex, as its textual categories (e.g. hagiography, laws, histories) were implicated in different social practices and differed in audience, rhetoric and ideology.

To be sure, broad distinctions can be drawn between women and children in Constantinople and those who lived in provincial towns or rural villages. Yet little is known about the latter before 1300, and more is known about women than children in all periods. Saints and nuns form a category that is more coherent and represented in the sources, as do the women and, in some cases, children of the imperial families. It is unfortunate, however, that we know more about those who were the least representative of Byzantine life. Moreover, much scholarship on women is about saints and the palace (generating a somewhat repetitive bibliography). In the present discussion, I will generally avoid those categories.

The goal of this chapter, however, is not to offer quotations and anecdotes from the sources as indicative of historical experience. It is to engage with some methodological challenges that have been posed to the very procedure of citing sources as evidence of social life and of what it was like to be a woman or a child in Byzantium. In the field of (early) Byzantine women's history, this challenge has been posed eloquently by Elizabeth Clark and linked to a methodological shift in humanities research often called the "Linguistic Turn."¹ This "Turn" is a belated expression of

an old problem in philosophy concerning knowledge of the world in general, applied now to the epistemology of historical research. Arthur Schopenhauer began his *The World as Will and Representation* at the point where it became clear “that one does not know a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels an earth; that the world around him is there only as representation.”² So too, by extension, we do not know the lives of past women and children, only the texts in which they are represented. But we should not mistake the modes of representation with those of life. So, Clark concluded, “I was reluctantly brought to admit that these women survived first and foremost as literary representations, not as ‘people,’ whom we, like anthropologists, might venture to interview. We could not hear the voices of ‘real women’ in these highly literary and rhetorical texts.”³ Clark ably demonstrated that we can know little about Makrina, the sister of Gregory of Nyssa: what we have in the text is a literary vehicle for his ideas that served his purposes; we do not hear her voice. His representation of her does not constitute a historical person, so social history yields to literary analysis.

The logic of the “Turn” cannot be denied, though recent studies of Byzantine women still assume that our sources are windows to the past, not perfect ones to be sure, but their limitations apparently do not require a methodological turn to the textual mechanisms of ideology and representation; it is possible, they imply, to recreate past experience.⁴ On a theoretical level there is a huge gap here, even though few have chosen to face it. As a field, Byzantine studies is conservative and engages belatedly or resists theoretical developments in the humanities and social sciences. Positivism still prevails, though this is changing among younger scholars. Sooner or later those who view “sources” as “evidence” that common sense can turn into historical narratives will come into conflict with those who, inspired largely by outside theorists, believe that texts are less fact than literary representation. The latter view is certainly stronger in Women’s studies and in cognate fields like Classics and Medieval studies. It is only a matter of time before the study of middle Byzantium catches up to these developments. I have chosen to discuss Clark because it is likely that her work will influence scholarship on later periods (though many studying late antiquity have already moved on from the hard version of the “Linguistic Turn” that Clark represents and that I confront here). At any rate, our source-gathering and source-citing habits are in trouble.

My concern is to head off a potential split and promote a middle ground for discussion. Both approaches have strong and weak points. On the one hand, traditional scholarship takes a naive view of the sources. The “Linguistic Turn” has occurred and should not be ignored. On the other hand, the theorists’ attempt to prove that *all* we have access to are textual strategies of representation has failed (and for good reason), though it remains more important than ever to come to terms with those strategies.

For scholars working with literary sources, the problem of representation is epistemologically urgent. Those sources are certainly not immaculate versions of the past. Nor is it just that they are “biased,” perhaps in favor of one person or policy against another. If it were so, all the historian would have to do is identify the bias and correct for it when producing a modern version of events, and this is commonly done. But matters are not so simple. “Bias” is a term that does not go far; “ideology” can go further. By ideology I mean the whole range and depth of ordering concepts,

polarities, interests and psychologies that create and sustain our view of ourselves and our relations with others and with the world at large; not merely a “set of beliefs” that one can identify near the surface and rationally discuss but deep-seated and usually unspoken intuitions.⁵ How women and children were represented was not a matter of bias, of some “belief” or other, of like or dislike. The term “bias” itself operates ideologically, by giving scholars the power to critique sources from a superior standpoint while simultaneously limiting critique to the superficial level of personal tastes or politics. We have ideology especially when we ignore how our key terms are limiting our view of the world, and “bias” has performed this service. (Not that authors don’t have biases, of course!) In addition, it is increasingly becoming known that Byzantine writers were not unoriginal hacks but intelligent authors capable of infusing their narratives with subtle literary, philosophical and religious images, ideas and allusions. It is in fact from this growing realization (rather than from more theoretical literature) that a paradigm shift will most likely occur in our field.

“Vanishing Ladies” can be found in the middle period to complement Clark’s analysis of Makrina in the Patristic era. I have chosen cases cited often by social historians as evidence. The rich widow Danielis lived in the Peloponnese in the ninth century and helped the future emperor Basil’s rise to power. Her enormous wealth, listed in the *Life of Basil*, has occasioned discussion among economic historians. However, Ilias Anagnostakis has argued that the narrative about Danielis is not merely exaggerated but largely fictional. Her relationship with Basil I was modeled on that between King Solomon and the queen of Sheba on the one hand and Alexander the Great’s visit to Kandake (as related in the Alexander Romance) on the other. The invention was meant, along with the other miraculous tales told about Basil in that text, to base his legitimacy and heroic stature in the realm of romantic fable and Scriptural parallel (he was also said to be descended from Alexander and sought to rival Solomon as a builder). Anagnostakis’ comparative analysis is detailed and convincing.⁶ The social and economic historian cannot respond that, even if the episode is invented, still it must have accorded with the realities of the period to have credibility with the readers of a historical text. For the point of this part of the *Life* is to highlight the extraordinary career of a future emperor and project his story onto the plane of legend. Though this lady vanishes, both she and the fantastic details about her property still appear in histories that have not yet made the “Linguistic Turn.”⁷

A case that poses similar problems is that of Theodote, Michael Psellos’ mother (first half of the eleventh century). Theodote was certainly a real person and she did many of the things Psellos said she did in his long eulogy for her (*Enkomion for his Mother*). Ever since Charles Diehl’s romantic and uncritical paraphrase of this text, Theodote has been regarded as a typical woman of the urban middle class (if a religious one). But in a recent commentary, I have argued that Psellos shaped or invented aspects of her life, especially her religion, to suit his needs at the moment of composition, when his intellectual interests were (again) being questioned. The work is his own personal defense and has even been entitled *his* autobiography by its Italian editor. It casts Theodote as a near-saint to ameliorate Psellos’ precarious position, partly by representing his pagan studies as inspired by her austere Christian devotion. Likely he misrepresented her motives and personality in the process, as

Gregory of Nyssa put his own philosophy into his sister's mouth. It is not clear how we can get around this problem as we have no independent sources. All we have is Psellos' self-serving rhetoric; we do not, at least at this stage, have access to the experience of "being Theodote."⁸

Likewise with Psellos' daughter Styliane, who died of plague at the age of nine and also received a eulogy. This is one of the most detailed representations of the life and death of a Byzantine child. Possibly we know more about her than any other child who was not of the palace or who did not go on to become a saint (and perhaps more so than most of them too). But we run into the same problem: the portrait is idealized and shaped by Psellos' ideas about the virtues of children and *his* moving questions about the justice of her death. These are not just biases that we can correct once we are aware of them: they are what the text largely consists of. There is little left after we remove them from the picture, at least little that is not banal and that we could not have predicted.⁹

So whereas traditional historians compile references and anecdotes in the hope that, taken altogether, they illustrate the facts and facets of life or even the experiences of women and children, the literary study of the texts has questioned this approach by showing, through a case-by-case analysis, that much of their content is not straightforwardly factual but serves personal, political, religious, rhetorical or ideological purposes. More and more texts are coming under such scrutiny,¹⁰ and it will be interesting to see what will be left in twenty years.

It is not only individual authors who are being questioned but the general impressions conveyed by the literary evidence as a whole, for when it came to social and domestic life ancient and medieval writers tended to draw attention only to unusual or aberrant events, of either good or bad fortune, extreme virtue or vice, in general when what they took to be the norm was disrupted. Our sources are filled with atypical cases. For example, Ruth Macrides has noted that "passionate love of one's spouse is rarely remarked upon by Byzantine writers, and then only when the person with those feelings is a 'barbarian' . . . Otherwise passionate love is attributed to Byzantine emperors for women who are not their wives."¹¹ This is actually a typical feature of Greek historiography. "Herodotos uses *eros* in only two senses: sexual desire and the desire for tyranny: in every instance of sexual desire (except one) it is illegitimate."¹² This does not mean that the Byzantines did not love their wives, even if statements to that effect are rare in the sources, only that authors did not comment on it unless it became historically significant (in which case something had gone horribly wrong). As Akropolites wrote in the preface to his *History* of the thirteenth century, "whatever is known by common report, this the historian ought to omit."¹³ Yet historians assume that what is reported most frequently in the sources was also most typical of the society at large, producing in some cases an extraordinarily violent Byzantium full of murderers and wife-beaters. This is like trying to understand modern life from the local news: it is probably safer to go by what they do *not* report. But how can we know that about Byzantium? All we have are reports that (inversely) reflect the sources' underlying assumptions about extreme deviations (tyranny, vice, barbarism), which are not sociological concepts a modern scholar can easily use.

Where does all this leave the history of women and children? Must we abandon our interest in the reality of their experiences and limit ourselves to the literary

analysis of our (epistemologically prior) sources? I don't think so. The "Linguistic Turn" has happened and is not turning back. But its implications have been overstated. Few now still hold to the doctrinaire nihilism – the rejection of the possibility of social history – that was popular in the wake of discovery. For Byzantine studies, one of the benefits of being behind the theoretical curve is that we take up advances only after they have moderated their claims, when they are more willing to compromise with reality.

Let us return to Clark's Vanishing Lady and the basic level of research on women and children, namely the search for what Byzantinists call *realia*. Whereas Byzantine historians did not feel the need to say that which everyone knew, this was not always true of hagiographers, who, in narrating their heroes' travels and dealings with people from all walks of life, frequently and casually reveal useful information about daily life. Historians wrote about the frontiers and the palace, whereas many hagiographers wrote about low and middle-class and village life. Because they wanted to persuade people to believe in the saints' miracles, they recreated realistic settings with which readers could identify. This information often does not contribute *in itself* to any ideological agenda in these texts and sometimes gets in the way of literary exposition. It is from here that we learn (and, through its repetition in many texts, confirm) basic facts regarding birth, marriage, family relations, the raising of children, illness and property.¹⁴ To be sure, most of this information is banal and, with the exception of religious life, does not distinguish Byzantium from other pre-modern Mediterranean societies. But it is a start.

Clark interrogates this evidence by appealing to Roland Barthes. It is precisely through such "authenticating details" that hagiographers induce their readers to accept the miracles and sanctity of their heroes, much as modern novelists make readers believe "the illusion that [is] being constructed . . . To put the matter more bluntly: the very details that social historians claim give veracity to a text are here repositioned as a creative artist's attempt to create an illusory reality" (19–20). But this observation, while true, is not decisive. Authenticating markers are no less authentic for being used to craft an illusion; they can function that way only if they reflect readers' experience and they are more credible to us when they appear in different genres (e.g. hagiography *and* epistolography). So even though *realia* are embedded in ideological or representational texts, this by itself does not make them less real, especially when they are taken out of that context.¹⁵ We need to differentiate between what we are being asked to believe and what authenticating details – that is, claims that we know are or well could be true – are being deployed to persuade us.

Consider the seventh-century collection of St Artemios' miracles. Miracle eleven begins as follows:

There was a woman who was in charge of the double baths of the hospital in the quarter of Paschentios . . . It happened that the baby which she had at her breast had developed a hernia and it was not possible for him to stop crying because of the pain. The mother was at a loss as to what she should do, since she could not leave the baths and, as she wished, wait upon the saint because she lived all alone with her husband. Then, in consequence of some divine admonition, she conceived the following course of action.¹⁶

The miracle was not that a woman in seventh-century Constantinople could run such a business (which is named, an authenticating touch), or that her husband was, apparently, unreliable or indifferent, but that Artemios healed the baby. It was the miracle that Byzantines greeted with skepticism, not the *realia*.¹⁷ This is the weakness of the Barthes–Clark view. Or consider the *Life of Theoktiste*, a fictional saint enslaved by Arab raiders. The tale is a hagiographical romance; Theoktiste, like Danielis, should figure more in literary studies than social histories, but that does not mean that her story does not also reflect the realities of island life in the ninth century.¹⁸

Yet not all *realia* are banal and some carry far-reaching implications. That a mother clutching a wailing baby could manage a public bath is interesting, as are the facts that non-aristocratic women in the provinces could manage properties in their own name, were listed as heads of households and ran businesses with male employees;¹⁹ also that trained nurses and female doctors were employed in state-run hospitals, which had separate women's wards.²⁰ Most women – though excluding many of the upper class – were apparently free to walk the streets and conduct whatever business they had with men in public.²¹ The jury is out on veils: possibly they existed, but were optional, a mark of modesty.²² Gathered from both documentary and literary sources, this information creates a picture at variance with that for Greek antiquity. Indeed, on one crucial point the evidence from the *realia* contradicts what Clark would call the “social logic” of Byzantine texts which suggest that women were not supposed to leave their quarters, even using the term *gynaikonites* (in antiquity a place of virtual confinement). It seems that the term conflicted with reality. As Laiou once noted, “the modern concept of the seclusion and isolation of Byzantine women from the rest of society is largely a misconception which extends earlier realities to periods when they no longer applied. The confinement of women to women's quarters was not a functional reality after the eleventh century,”²³ and likely it was not earlier too.

The implications of this bear on the question at the heart of the “Linguistic Turn.” Whereas Clark could not get around Gregory's construction of Makrina, in part because she lacked truly independent sources, it is possible to see past the social logic of Byzantine authors who distorted the realities of women's lives by anachronistically deploying the “social-linguistic framework” of past ages – or their own wishful thinking – regarding the *gynaikonites* and the idea that women should not be (were not?) seen in public. That they deployed this representation is interesting in itself and should be studied as a component of social history, but it is methodologically hopeful that we *can* circumvent representations, and this, in one way or another, has always been the historian's job.

But Clark's thesis goes beyond social history. “The Lady Vanishes” seems ultimately to lament that women's “voices,” “real” women “pure and simple” (31), cannot be recovered. Clark does not define these objectives but I take them to signify the subjective experience of being a woman. The problem with Makrina is that she speaks through Gregory, so her words and persona in the text turn out to be a function of his authorial strategy. In the middle Byzantine period we have two women who wrote in their own name, the liturgical poet Kassia or Kasiane (ninth century) and the historian Anna Komnene (twelfth). The obstacles we face in recovering their “voices” are different but perhaps equally insoluble as with Makrina.

The problem is that *all* texts are mediated by what Clark calls a “social-linguistic framework,” not just those written by men about women. It is not clear how we can recover “voices” (assuming this means “authentic experience”) from texts written by women.²⁴ What is “authentic experience” anyway? How can it be represented in discourse at all, for men as for women? Can Clark point to a *male* writer whose “voice pure and simple” we can hear through the literary language and the mediation of literary persona, genre and “social-linguistic framework”? How can we know whether what we uncover is authentic and not a function of self-representation or ideology? It is not clear that the subject that Clark seeks – the “voice,” the woman “pure and simple” – exists. Do we even have access to our own “authentic” being, or are our own voices to ourselves not also mediated by ideology (in the sense defined above)? What would constitute an authentic self-representation?

Certainly, it would be nice to have more texts by women. But the fact that we do not is indicative of the circumstances of their lives. So perhaps the interest in “voices,” however moving, may be an epistemological dead-end. It is so set up that it must fail, and it does, rightly so, in Clark’s analysis. What we have more hopes of attaining is social history, which begins on a humble level with the *realia* discussed above. Beyond that point we must recognize that we are again dealing with representations of social reality and not “authentic” subjectivity (whatever that is). This is less an obstacle, however, than an invitation for literary critics and historians to finally join forces.

For example, there is a series of texts from the middle period that reveal affection and gratitude by *sons* toward *mothers*, texts that are not paralleled when it comes to *fathers*. I am thinking of Theodoros Stoudites’ *Funerary Catechism for his Mother* (Theoktiste); Christophoros Mytilenaios’ *Elegy for his Mother* (Zoe) and his three consolatory poems for her death (two addressed to his father);²⁵ Michael Radenos’ devotion to his mother (his father does not receive a similar section in Psellos’ *Mono-dia* for Michael);²⁶ Psellos’ own *Enkomion for his Mother* (Theodote); the emperor Alexios I Komnenos’ extraordinary devotion to Anna Dalassene (as related by his daughter in *Alexiad* 3.6–7); and many saints’ lives that “assigned to the mother a crucial role in paving her son’s path of holiness.”²⁷ There is little to show on the father’s side (Gregory Antiochos’ four annual *Funeral Orations for his Father*).²⁸ “Fatherhood” in texts – as opposed to reality – was mostly a religious or social relationship. Yet as far as I know, there is no study, literary and social rather than Mariological, of the construction of motherhood in Byzantium and its implications for childhood (at least that of our authors). Most research has been on the *realia*.

Another field of potential research is violence against women (in times of peace) and unhappy marriages. The most cited case is that of St Thomaïs (tenth century), who was beaten by her husband but persevered in her piety, making her a martyr in the hagiographer’s eyes. Thomaïs is an example of the turn from ascetic female saints to the “pious housewife.”²⁹ But what can we learn from her about Byzantine society? Thomaïs herself – her “voice” – is irretrievable: she too became a vehicle for religious and rhetorical abstractions. Certainly, some men did beat their wives; also women in Constantinople were, like her, free to walk about as they pleased, but we cannot draw more personal conclusions from this text or establish patterns of domestic behavior. We will never have a sociology of spousal relations. What we can study is the representation of exceptional cases, and one extreme can usually be found to

counter another. Consider the episode related by John Skylitzes in the eleventh century: a Varangian attempted to rape a Byzantine woman but she killed him with his own weapon, and was then given his property by his comrades in compensation. So not all women endured violence passively, though this event was recognized as being “extraordinary,” like the story of Thomaïs.³⁰ And exceptionality is both a literary and an ideological challenge facing the historian who uses these sources.

In a different direction, Thomaïs’ quiet tragedy is matched by the comic abuse suffered by the poetic persona of Ptochoprodromos at the hands, or rather the sharp tongue, of his wife.³¹ With both texts – battered wife, harried husband – we are in the realm of literature, inspirational or entertaining, and not social fact, certainly not what social scientists should take as being representative of social fact. Narratives activated readers’ imaginations, not their social experiences, for who knew what went on in other homes anyway? Narrative texts did not *have* to be “authentic” in this way to be believable, for literary imagination can supplant one’s own experience. In 1406 the emperor Manuel II banned eunuchs on Mt Athos “to prevent women disguised as eunuchs and the beardless [from] entering male monasteries.”³² Did the emperor know such cases or had he been reading the (fictionalized) saints’ lives of women who had done just that? Such acts, we must insist, were by their nature extraordinary; there could not be a “common perception” of them. It is *possible* that no such women ever existed, but their “social logic” entered the world of lived perception through the literary elaboration of gender anxieties, a function of ideology.

These comments hardly exhaust the analysis that should be brought to these texts. They merely indicate some of the ways in which social history now presupposes literary criticism. Moreover, the assumptions shared by the readers of a text were not necessarily those of society in general, and there is no way to know whether those readers shared the “social logic” of the text in the first place. Contrary to what much scholarship has implied, the Byzantines could think for themselves and did not believe everything they read; they also disagreed with each other about fundamental issues. The term “social logic” must be used with caution, for the assumption that there was only one operative in each society is one of the main temptations and dangers of the “Linguistic Turn.” I would like to discuss this problem in conclusion.

Clark’s argument is that the textual representation of women reflects less reality than a certain “social logic” (24, 27), a “larger social-linguistic framework” (31) that apparently governed male authorship. This was a concept deployed by Gabrielle Spiegel to cope with the fact that “texts both mirror and generate social realities, which they may sustain, resist, contest or seek to transform.” Although Spiegel insisted that no text “is ultimately reducible to an articulation of a preexisting system of linguistic codes” and that “there is no way to determine a priori the social function of a text or its locus with respect to its cultural ambiance”³³ – the social logic of the *Life of St Thomaïs* being very different, for example, from that of Ptochoprodromos – it may prove difficult for Byzantinists, who are not merely the heirs but often still the practitioners of nineteenth-century historicism, not to slide from the “social logic of the text” to the “social logic of Byzantium as a whole,” to reduce everything to the “preexisting system of linguistic codes” against which Spiegel warned. It is one thing to uncover the rhetorical-theological strategies of one text by Gregory of Nyssa and quite another to discover the “social logic” of middle Byzantium. In this instance,

Clark has made one woman vanish, but the mode of her analysis applies to this text alone and to others only if they are like it in the relevant respects. I have seen no proof that all Byzantine authors employed the same “social logic” and am inclined to disbelieve it. What I see in the sources is tension about fundamental matters, refuting the idea of a unitary logic which is so dear to many historians of Byzantium.

These tensions create opportunities that historians can exploit. Consider the education of girls: many authoritative voices claimed it was unnecessary or dangerous. Clark refers to the “general patristic denigration of women’s mental capabilities” (22). Gregory, though casting Makrina as a fount of philosophy, insisted that she had studied only Scripture, a conceit that plays a crucial role in Clark’s analysis. But was this “general patristic denigration” the only Byzantine “social logic” on this issue? One can easily find statements regarding the mental inferiority or moral weakness of women. Some acted on this belief. For example, Psellos’ grandparents forbade his mother to learn letters because she was a girl. Alexios I forbade his daughter Anna to study grammar as it was full of pagan immorality that would corrupt her. And yet Psellos praises his mother for “evading the attention of her mother whenever she could to pick up the basic principles of letters from someone, and soon began, through her own efforts, to join them together and to form syllables and sentences, without having any need for an instructor in the basics.”³⁴ Anna too was praised in her eulogy for doing the same against her parents’ wishes; she later boasted of her Hellenic learning in the preface to the *Alexiad*.³⁵ There were divergent opinions in Byzantium regarding the education of girls. Psellos had his daughter educated, and it seems there were enough like-minded parents in Constantinople to create at least one school for girls.³⁶ A Platonist, he believed that women possess more or less the same mental capacities as men, which is a position that Anna and her circle of scholars shared.

Some theorists of the “Linguistic Turn” went too far in treating all authors from the same culture as undifferentiated carriers of the same social values. But no one then went on to excavate that invisible matrix and define its contours (the *epistemes* that Foucault boldly proposed for early modern Europe are now widely perceived as failures, certainly as totalizing systems). The term “social logic” can be used in a way that displaces explanation away from the close literary reading of individual texts onto a self-subsisting, uniform substratum of pure ideology. Ironically, a methodology that began by asserting the priority of texts ended up in the work of some theorists by subsuming them beneath an abstraction that occluded their individuality. By contrast, to recognize many “social logics” in the same culture is to bring forth tension and so social dynamism. This generates history, even if only (on a first reading) of texts and mentalities. There was not one view about the intelligence of women in Byzantium. This is a crucial fact because it requires a discussion of historical alternatives, in terms of both mentalities and behaviors. Chief among them, for our purposes, is the decision of certain women (and girls) to reject or resist the “general patristic denigration” (which may have been less general than some think). This, in turn, means for the historian that defiance was possible both ideologically and practically.

Nor was their feat a conventional *topos* used in praising virtuous women, for the details are different in each case. Anna’s parents were concerned about the moral effects of Greek mythology, and so Anna ended up a Hellenist scholar (it is worth noting that her eulogist, George Tornikes, was more comfortable with biblical

culture, so in praising her secular education he was actually going against his preferred “social logic”). Compare this with the case of Theoktiste, the mother of Theodoros Stoudites. No one had prevented her from reading (unlike Anna) yet, for religious reasons (so, again, unlike Anna), she decided to teach herself. “When divine longing had increased in her heart, because she was illiterate . . . this wise one taught herself, and learnt the Psalter by heart . . . How did she do this? Not by occupying herself with study during the day, lest she should annoy her husband or neglect the household, but before bed-time and after bed-time, working with effort by the light of a lamp.”³⁷ These episodes (and that of Psellos’ mother) were not modeled on each other; moreover, while they are exaggerated and certainly caught up in the rhetorical strategies of particular texts, they open the door for a discussion of the historical opportunities available to many girls and the resourcefulness of some of them in exploiting them.

What we need, then, are literary studies of our main sources, studies that approach specific topics in social history through the refracting lens of different genres and authors. How did history, hagiography, rhetoric, legal and court documents represent, say, troubled marriages or childhood? The field has been building toward this,³⁸ but not yet explicitly in terms of the problems posed by the “Linguistic Turn.” Before we accumulate more facts, we need more focused literary-historical case studies that examine the inner and outer workings of our sources. The missing ingredient before the field can move in this direction is an up-to-date history of Byzantine literature. Versions of this have been discussed and are being planned.³⁹ The “middle” position I have sketched in this chapter requires historians to engage closely with texts – every Byzantine historian should also be a philologist – and future scholars of Byzantine literature to avoid using literary criticism to attack social history. I should like to add in conclusion that there is no worthwhile notion that cannot be stated in plain language; the effort to avoid the jargon of so much literary theory will promote clarity and trust and enhance the collaboration between disciplines that are now indispensable to each other.

NOTES

* I thank Giorgos Anagnostou, Carolina López Ruiz, Leonora Neville and Tina Sessa for their valuable suggestions.

- 1 Clark 1998b. To save space, references have been kept to a minimum.
- 2 Schopenhauer 1969, 1819: v. 1, 3. For an introduction to the history of this insight, see Magee 1983.
- 3 Clark 2004b: 67.
- 4 E.g. Connor 2004; Nikolaou 2005; Garland 2006a, with “Experience” in the title.
- 5 For an introduction to the history of this concept, see Eagleton 2007, 1991: esp. 20–1, 115, 148–9, 156–8, 194–6, 221.
- 6 Anagnostakis 1989.
- 7 E.g. Lefort 2002: 241, and in other contributions to Laiou 2002b; Garland 2006a: xiv.
- 8 Diehl 1925; Kaldellis 2006: 29–109.
- 9 Kaldellis 2006: 111–38; cf. the reconstruction at 17–28.
- 10 E.g. Leonora Neville’s contribution to this volume, Chapter 6; Efthymiades’ analysis of Theodoros Stoudites’ oration for his mother in Efthymiades and Featherstone 2007: 13–25.
- 11 Macrides 2007: 209. For legal and literary evidence, see Laiou 1993: 145, 198.
- 12 Benardete 1969: 136; the exception is Kandaules, and even he came to grief; in Prokopios, see Kaldellis 2004: 77–9.

- 13 Translated in Macrides 2007: 105.
- 14 Nikolaou 2005.
- 15 Eagleton 2007, 1991: 8–9, 22.
- 16 Crisafulli and Nesbitt 1997: 96–7, translation slightly modified.
- 17 Kaldellis forthcoming.
- 18 A. G. Hero in Talbot 1996: 95–116.
- 19 Nikolaou 2005: 285–315; Neville 2004: 70–3; Neville 2006.
- 20 Miller 1997: 15, 214.
- 21 Nikolaou 2005: 215–28; Garland 2006b: 166.
- 22 Dawson 2006: 61–3.
- 23 Laiou 1981: 249; also Kazhdan 1998b: 5.
- 24 Kassia: Lauxtermann 2003: 241–70; Silvas 2006 is cavalier with the problems; Anna: Gouma-Peterson 2000.
- 25 Kurtz 1903: 33–6.
- 26 Gautier 1978: 118–19.
- 27 Efthymiades in Efthymiades and Featherstone 2007: 25. Cf. also Theodoros of Nikaia's letter of consolation to Leon: Kazhdan 2006: 175.
- 28 Sideras 1991: 89–184.
- 29 P. Halsall in Talbot 1996: 291–322.
- 30 Skylitzes, *Epitome of Histories: Michael IV* 4, in Skylitzes 1973: 394; the scene is illustrated in the Madrid ms.: Tsamakda 2002: fig. 493.
- 31 Alexiou 2002: 134–8.
- 32 Tougher 2006: 239.
- 33 Spiegel 1997: 24; see Clark 2004a: 162–5.
- 34 Psellos, *Enkomion for his Mother* 3b, in Kaldellis 2006: 55. For female literacy, see Cavallo 2006: 32–4, 42–6.
- 35 George Tornikes, *Funeral Oration for Anna Komnene*, in Darrouzès 1970: 243–5.
- 36 Kaldellis 2006: 22.
- 37 Theodoros Stoudites, *Funerary Catechism for his Mother* 3, in Efthymiades and Featherstone 2007: 27, 43.
- 38 For legal sources, see Laiou 1993; for court documents, Macrides 1999.
- 39 Odorico and Agapitos 2002.

CHAPTER SIX

STRONG WOMEN AND THEIR HUSBANDS IN BYZANTINE HISTORIOGRAPHY



Leonora Neville

Through the centuries Byzantine emperors had mothers, wives and daughters, and these women consistently took on significant political roles when opportunities arose. Imperial women appear more frequently however in eleventh- and twelfth-century histories, and it is on this period that I shall focus. This phenomenon has been interpreted as indicative of a greater political role for women, brought on by the “aristocratization” of Byzantine politics in the Komnenian era.¹ I would argue however that at least some appearances by women in eleventh- and twelfth-century histories are due to the increased use of classical Roman models by Byzantine historians.

Eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantine historians were able to call on a common understanding and appreciation of classical Roman behavioral ideals shared by their audience. Interest in classical forms and Roman history increased markedly in this era of greater literary experimentation.² Historians could appeal to ideals of properly gendered behavior, and memories of how great Romans of the past had acted, in order to comment on the behavior of the historical actors whose deeds they were narrating. For both writers and audience, particular situations would call to mind dramatic events of the past. The historian’s rhetorical positioning of the current event in relation to the remembered past could craft the response of the audience to recent history.

This phenomenon lies behind an odd repetition of a dramatic scene involving a speech by a woman in the histories of Michael Psellos and Nikephoros Bryennios. In describing the abdication of Isaac Komnenos in 1057, Psellos has Isaac’s wife Aikatherine plead with him not to give up power. And when Isaac abdicates in Bryennios’ history, his brother John’s wife, Anna Dalassene, urges John to take power himself. Although different in style and details, the two speeches have enough in common in terms of content and force for scholars to have considered them “the same speech.”³ This is not a case of misattribution of an actual speech by one of our historians, but of a similar rhetorical response to the challenge of writing about abdication. Something about the circumstance of men giving up power suggested to Psellos and Bryennios that they should first introduce women into the plot and then have them speak up forcefully. Bryennios was happy to incorporate large sections of

Psellos' history into his own with few changes, so something significant drove him to rework this scene with different characters. The key to the function of the speeches by Aikatherine and Anna, I shall argue, lies in understanding the authors' appreciation of classical Roman social norms generally, and Prokopios' *Wars* in particular.

The speeches by Aikatherine and Anna are each one of the few instances of direct female speech in Psellos and Bryennios, both historians well versed in classical historiography and the role that set speeches played in crafting descriptions. Like their classical predecessors, their decision to quote speech directly rather than describe it was deliberate and purposeful.⁴ Direct speech by women was made particularly significant by the continuing appreciation of the ancient Greek injunction for women not to be heard.⁵ This normative stance, however contested in practice, became a standard part of classical Roman discourse.⁶ The particular speeches made by the Byzantine wives in question were speeches of advice that attempted to persuade. This is significant because Greek, and Roman, women were considered to be most dangerous when they influenced the actions of men.⁷ Late Roman historians regularly told stories of empresses who influenced their husbands when they wanted to criticize those emperors.⁸ The cultural ideas that made this sort of speechmaking by women unsettling still underpin the logic of our eleventh- and twelfth-century texts.

In addition to appealing to classical notions of appropriately gendered behavior generally, by presenting wives attempting to convince their husbands to strive vigorously for imperial power, our authors are engaging with Prokopios of Caesarea. For Prokopios uses those norms in his famous description of Theodora's speech before Justinian and his counselors during the Nika riots of 532. To properly interpret Psellos and Bryennios we must attempt to recover a medieval reading of Prokopios.

In Prokopios' description, Theodora's speech stands out, among other things, because it is reported as direct speech. This is the only time Theodora speaks in *History of the Wars*, although she is mentioned in passing on a few other occasions.⁹ Prokopios calls attention to the incongruity of a woman speaking by having Theodora open her speech with an apology.¹⁰ Prokopios thus has Theodora appear more modest through her acknowledgement that women ought to be deferential and simultaneously points out her transgression. Beyond the surprise of having a woman speak in a council, the content of Theodora's speech is unexpected. She offers a courageous call to fight not flee. This is not a sentiment associated with femininity in classical constructions of gender. Rather Theodora is being portrayed like a man and her expression of the masculine characteristics of strength and courage serves to point out how much the men are acting like women. The primary function of Theodora's speech is to shame the men around her "into acting manly" by being more masculine than they.¹¹ Having heard Theodora, the men were "seized by boldness" and began to plot militarily.¹² The result of their newfound valor was an attack on the rioters in the hippodrome.

The immediate function of Theodora's speech is to shame Justinian, and here Prokopios was following a common late Roman rhetorical strategy. Shaming men was one of several common uses of the stereotype of "female weakness" for patristic writers.¹³ Stories and discussion of women in late Roman texts have less interest in depicting the lives of women than with using those rhetorical statements to comment on the power of the men who stand in relation to those women.¹⁴ In Theodora's case the assertion of masculine courage by a wife serves to cast her husband as weak and

effeminate. To avoid this characterization, Justinian and his generals immediately turn to arms.

Yet this merely leads to the larger question of why Justinian needed to be shamed in the first place. Why does Prokopios include this scene of inverted gender roles in his text? Brubaker explains it as a marker of the intensity of the difficulty at that moment:

By depicting men as fearful (the way the Byzantines believed women behaved) and a woman as daring (the way the Byzantines believed a man behaved), Prokopios inverted Byzantine gender stereotypes to indicate the gravity of the occasion: the situation was so bad that the natural order was reversed, with men quaking like women and a woman speaking like a man.¹⁵

I would argue that in addition it is a way of denigrating Justinian. Showing Justinian shamed by a woman's boldness is one of several attacks on his manhood evident in the episode. Not only does her daring highlight his fear, but he is caught listening to his wife's advice. He is no mere victim of the private workings of womanly influence, but has so little control over his household that his wife is seen to have public sway.

This degradation based on mishandling of gender-roles is supplemented by suggestions that Justinian is in fact a tyrant rather than an emperor.¹⁶ Theodora's speech, in its final line, includes a poorly veiled comparison between Justinian and the infamous ancient tyrant Dionysios of Syracuse: "For as for myself, I approve a certain ancient saying that royalty is a good burial-shroud."¹⁷ The ancient aphorism was not that "royalty," but rather "tyranny," made a good shroud. The well-known story was that when Dionysios faced a dangerous rebellion in 403 BC, he was persuaded not to flee by a friend who advised that tyranny made a good burial-shroud.¹⁸ Theodora's quotation, even modified, "suggests a comparison" between Justinian and the infamous Dionysios.¹⁹ Both rulers survived the riots by crushing the insurrections. Not all of Prokopios' readers would have caught the classical allusion and been able to spot the change in wording, but some certainly did.²⁰ It would have been clear to them that Prokopios portrayed Theodora as prompting Justinian to act like a merciless tyrant.

The very response to the insurrection reveals Justinian's lack of moderation and mercy: chief characteristics of a tyrant. Prokopios records the number of the civilian dead as 30,000. Such a number could not but be seen as an excessive slaughter. Prokopios does shield both Justinian and his generals, Belisarius and Mundus, from accusations that they willingly decided to attack civilians. Justinian merely ordered them to go to the hippodrome, and then various obstacles led them to attack the populace rather than the rebel emperor Hypatius. So Prokopios' overt meaning is not accusatory and can even be seen as sympathetic to Justinian. The feebleness of the obstacles he describes, however, invite the reader to question whether Belisarius and Justinian were in fact guilty of bloodlust. Belisarius and his army were prevented from attacking Hypatius directly by:

a small door . . . which had been closed and was guarded by the soldiers of Hypatius who were inside . . . Concluding, therefore, that he must go against the populace who had taken their stand in the hippodrome – a vast multitude

crowding each other in great disorder – he drew his sword from its sheath and, commanding the others to do likewise, with a shout he advanced upon them at a run.²¹

Prokopios proceeds to draw implicit contrasts between Belisarius' brave, experienced and armed soldiers and the disorganized populace trying desperately to flee. Once Mundus saw that Belisarius was attacking the populace rather than Hypatius' guards, he too joined in the attack on the people in the hippodrome. The story that Belisarius, soon to become famous as the conqueror of Africa, together with his army, was prevented from arresting Hypatius because a few guards had closed a "small door" is simply not convincing. The narrative is constructed so that a nuanced reading has Justinian ordering his generals to attack the populace, and that is the common modern reading.²²

Largely because of her courageous speech during the Nika riots, Theodora has entered the modern imagination as a heroine.²³ This is a case where differences between modern and late antique values and understandings of appropriate gender behavior lead to the attribution of an entirely different meaning to the text. A society that prizes courage in women would read the story first as about Theodora, and second positively. When judged by the values and ideals of behavior of the sixth century, this is a serious misreading. As a result of Theodora's advice, Justinian lost his sense of moderation and ordered an inhumane slaughter. It did keep Justinian in power, but at a price that would make later generations shudder.

Prokopios' story of Theodora advising Justinian to fight was well known in the medieval period as an episode showing the evils of female influence. When the episode appears in Michael Glykas' twelfth-century universal history, it is said that Hagia Sophia was built by Justinian to atone for his great sin. The emperor was ready to flee the riotous city, "but his wife commanded him saying 'royalty was a good shroud,' " and then 35,000 people fell in the fighting.²⁴ In this brief version of the story, the blame falls squarely on an unnamed Theodora. According to Genesios' history, when Michael I abdicated, his wife Prokopia protested, telling him that "royalty was a good shroud."²⁵ Michael abdicated anyway. This clear allusion to Prokopios' Theodora was incorporated verbatim into John Skylitzes' history in the late eleventh century.²⁶ Michael I is portrayed as a peaceful man precisely because he did not listen to his wife. However appealing Theodora's story is to modern minds, it seems clear that it was considered differently by medieval, male, authors.

While authors of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries shared, or at least employed, the same basic conceptions of proper gender behavior as Prokopios, their cultural contexts differed from his in several key respects. Perhaps the most significant for our purposes is that history in the later era was written by high-ranking imperial officials, judges, courtiers and members of the imperial family.²⁷ Psellos was a high-ranking official who served as a close advisor to a number of emperors.²⁸ Bryennios was Alexios I Komnenos' son-in-law and an active general under John II. In writing history they attempted to come to terms with events in which they and their families had been active participants. Moreover, at least some of these histories were written expressly for performance and consumption at the imperial court. Live performance of literary compositions was an increasingly significant aspect of court life in the twelfth century.²⁹ Bryennios' history is known to have been commissioned

by Alexios' wife Irene.³⁰ This phenomenon of political history written by and for the politically active imperial elite should color our reading of the abdication scenes written by Bryennios and Psellos.

Psellos and Bryennios both included manipulation of proper gender ideals among the tools used to strengthen their characterizations. The norms employed are those of the classical Mediterranean. One episode from Psellos' history, where these heighten tension and drama, may serve as an example. In his description of the affair between Empress Zoe and the future Michael IV, Psellos emphasizes the disorder of the imperial household by portraying Zoe as a masculine and aggressive lover. Michael is described as blushing and modest when they meet – standard terms for a woman or passive sexual partner. The elderly Zoe is chiefly characterized as desirous, aflame with sexual passion. Zoe is the pursuing lover and only under her active encouragement and passionate kisses does Michael respond.³¹ To call attention to the point Psellos refers to Michael as a lover (*eraste*) and then corrects himself to say he was the beloved (*eromenon*).³² This draws on the common classical distinction between the active and passive sexual partners.³³ Since Michael was male, it would have been normal to call him the lover, and the woman, who was supposed to be passive, the beloved. Psellos' correction of his error ensures that no one would miss his rhetorical inversion of gender roles.

Romanos, who was eventually murdered to allow Zoe to marry Michael, is gradually emasculated as he moves through stages of ignorance, willful blindness and accommodation.³⁴ In Psellos' portrait Romanos is unmanned at least as much by his inability to control his household as by his wife's affair. He allowed his ministers to introduce Michael to Zoe and plot his replacement in his own house. Romanos had a further lapse in his control over his household in that his sister, Pulcheria, who acted with a proper righteous fury, undertook a "battle" against Zoe.³⁵ The two women with their supporters turned the palace into a battleground, thus inverting the ancient association of peace with domesticity and war with public life. Contrary to the view that this episode "demonstrates the trust placed in family members of either sex,"³⁶ Pulcheria appears in order to show Romanos' inability to maintain a peaceful household. The story of Zoe's adultery is immediately followed with that of Romanos' grave illness and then his murder. Through this juxtaposition, Psellos indicates that by losing control over his wife and his household Romanos became unfit to attempt to control the empire.

Although Michael took the female role while Zoe was pursuing him, once married, crowned and in control of the government, Michael IV mastered his body and was ruled by reason not passions.³⁷ Through his renunciation of sex with Zoe after their marriage, he asserted control over himself and the empire and manifested one of the greatest classical virtues: *sophrosyne* or self-control.³⁸ Michael's assertion of self-control re-establishes him as male, sound of mind and capable of ruling.

Zoe's romance with and promotion of Michael is just one of many examples where Psellos uses classical Greek ideas of gender roles to enhance and clarify his characterizations. While some basic cultural continuity is assured, this medieval use of classical gender norms also may be a matter of literary and rhetorical posturing related to the revival of interest in Roman history and self-conscious imitation of Roman and Greek ideals. Use of classical gender ideas by medieval authors does not indicate that there were no changes in cultural constructions of gender between the

sixth and twelfth centuries. Some changes are apparent, for example shifting attitudes toward eunuchs, who had positive gender roles available to them by the tenth century.³⁹ Then, the prophet Daniel was routinely assumed to have been a court eunuch serving the Babylonian king.⁴⁰ The actual attitudes of our authors toward women and men may have differed significantly from those of the classical authors from whom they drew. Psellos indicates that he was not among those who thought that the eleventh-century empress Theodora needed a man to help her govern the empire.⁴¹ Still, if Byzantine ideas had changed in practice, the models of behavior these authors manipulated to create their characters were essentially classical.

This context of rhetorical use of classical gender ideals and the appreciation of Roman historiography – Prokopios in particular – elucidates the function of the speeches by political wives in Psellos’ and Bryennios’ histories. Aikatherine’s speech to her husband Isaac Komnenos, at the point of his abdication in favor of Constantine Doukas, is the longest speech by a woman in Psellos’ history. Psellos sets the scene by describing Isaac as deathly ill and surrounded by his grieving family. He uses terminology of ancient Greek tragedy for ritual female lamentation: “The empress led the dirge, and the daughter, answering her mother with weeping, bewailed in turn more mournfully.”⁴² That Aikatherine is first seen as the leader of the chorus of dirges connects her with an ancient tradition of female mourning that deeply associated women with irrationality and grief.⁴³ While the women wailed, the men remained calm and Isaac asked to become a monk. Aikatherine immediately accused Psellos of having encouraged Isaac to retire. Isaac said it was his own idea “but this [woman] (he really said that) pleading like a woman, hinders us from the better counsel, and accuses every one of the proposition rather than me.” Aikatherine responded:

“Yes I do,” she said, “And I take upon my neck all your sins, and if you revive, I have what of course I seek and desire; if not, then I will defend you before the judge, even God, for the things that you have done wrong. And may all [your] deeds be blameless for you; yet for you I would gladly be torn asunder by worms, covered by deep darkness and consumed by utter fire! So then do you not pity our solitude? What kind of soul do you have to take yourself away from the palace, and leave me behind to a most sorrowful widowhood, and grievous orphanhood to your daughter? But these things will not be enough for us, but worse things will appear for us; hands, probably not benevolent, will carry us into distant exile, perhaps they may decide something worse, and a bloodthirsty man will see your dear ones and know no pity. You will live on after your change in habit, or perhaps die with honor, but for us a life will remain, more bitter than death!”⁴⁴

Aikatherine’s pleading is hyperbolic and disordered, jumping quickly from one argument to the next. She is not presented as possessed of refined rhetorical skills but rather as nearly hysterical. Isaac is presented as disliking both Aikatherine’s advice and her act of advising. He derisively calls her not “my wife” but “this one” (*aute*). Today it is considered rude to use this form of the pronoun to refer to a person while he or she is present. That it was already considered rude, or at least dismissive, in the eleventh century is suggested by Psellos’ aside assuring the reader that these were

Isaac's exact words. Isaac then says that she is "pleading like a woman," signaling perhaps that he would rather she not speak and that he will not be taken in by her pleading.⁴⁵ He does ignore all of Aikatherine's pleading and proceeds with his plan to take monastic vows.

When Nikephoros Bryennios describes Isaac's abdication several decades later, during the reign of Isaac's nephew Alexios, it is a very different story. Bryennios has Isaac offer imperial power first to his brother John, and only when John refuses has him turn to Constantine Doukas. On this point Bryennios' history stands in contradiction to Psellos, Attaleiates and Skylitzes Continuatus, being far more favorable to the Komnenos dynasty. As in Psellos' story, Isaac falls ill while hunting. Aikatherine does not appear and there is no discussion of Isaac's decision to retire. Rather the story focuses on his succession. Isaac makes a rousing speech to John, asking him to take up the difficult burden of imperial rule. John is greatly distressed and "ready to suffer all things rather than to take up the public affairs."⁴⁶ His wife on the other hand:

took his reticence very badly and sitting close beside her husband she assailed him with these words: "Why my lord, do you turn the sword toward yourself and the dear ones, neither pitying their youth or caring about us? Do you not know that if someone else takes up the empire of the Romans, he will hasten to get all your family out of the way thinking thus to secure the matters of empire more firmly to himself? Why are we brought to naught, casting ourselves and the dear ones to manifest danger and we are driven from the kingship of the Romans which everyone desires? Why this harmful philosophy and untimely modesty? But if you may not be persuaded by me, hasten most quickly to be persuaded by the counsels of your emperor and brother and take up the affairs." Saying these things and more – for she was a clever one at speaking and doing – since he was not persuaded, she turned to supplications and she presented intercessions with tears and lamentations; but he thus with un-softened ears was hardened to everything, and she, giving up on persuading him, was silent and she was greatly pained and was of sad countenance about it. Thus he turned away from kingship."⁴⁷

Martial imagery characterizes Anna's opening argumentative "assault." Once the rational, masculine argument fails, she turns to feminine begging and pleading with tears and laments. The term translated above as "intercessions" (*enteuxis*) also means sexual intercourse. The implication is that she went through all the modes of persuasion available to her, of both masculine and feminine forms.

Bryennios thus abbreviates Psellos' memorable abdication scene for Isaac but recreates it in a new form for Anna and John. Anna's speech is similar to Aikatherine's speech in Psellos, but it is not a copy.⁴⁸ Since much of Book One of Bryennios' history is copied almost verbatim from Psellos', there must have been specific reasons why he chose to compose a new speech saying essentially the same thing and especially for switching the speaker from Aikatherine to Anna. His audience would have known Psellos' history and surely remembered the drama of Aikatherine's pleading with Isaac. The recurrence of the same basic episode, acted by different characters, is a strong indicator that something in the story was rhetorically necessary. By having

Isaac offer the purple to his brother, Bryennios has created the same situation of a man turning down power, which seems to call for a speech by a woman asking him to pursue power.

One key difference between the eleventh-century women and Theodora is that they were unsuccessful in persuading their men to act rashly. The women end up frustrated. Since their advice was ignored and had no effect on politics, why was it so important to record their advice? Why are women's voices heard here after being so consistently silent? I propose that the very act of ignoring their wives allowed these men to appear masculine while engaging in actions that were passive and weak; hence essentially feminine. Consider how these men would have looked otherwise. Both Isaac and John would simply rather not be emperor. Isaac is given the excuse of illness, but no one expresses any surprise that he recovered. John was of perfectly good health and possessed of the proper aristocratic training for government service. He is described by Bryennios simply as not wanting to take up the heavy burden of government. Looking only at the course of events one would expect these men to appear cowardly, irresolute and irresponsible.

The stories of women arguing in favor of political action work to excuse their husbands' inaction by affording them the opportunity to resist womanly influence and exercise self-control and moderation. Whereas Justinian was pushed to excess by a woman, these men refused to be goaded. Their steadiness in the face of female hysteria gave them the opportunity to appear resolute, calm, strong and in control, when in fact they were cowed by circumstances. They may have been stepping down, but at least they stood up to their wives.

Aikatherine and Anna's arguments with their husbands differ significantly from Theodora's in that they advocated for their families. They urged their husbands to seek power, not because they lusted after power or glory, but because they wanted protectors for their families. Theodora is guilty of an "unfeminine" concern with political power which renders her masculine and transgressive. In contrast, Aikatherine and Anna stay fully and safely feminine by embracing the role of the protective Roman mother. Concern for properly raising and caring for children was part of the classical Roman construction of female virtue.⁴⁹ Twelfth-century encomia show that two of the central virtues for imperial women were fertility and control of family.⁵⁰ Aikatherine and Anna both argue that their children will be imperiled if their father gives up political power and make the protection of their families their main concern. This change from Prokopios' narrative casts Anna and Aikatherine as far more positive characters. They function to display their husbands' self-control and temperance, but they do so without taking on the negative characteristics of Theodora.

While both Aikatherine and Anna thus look better than Theodora, Anna receives still more favorable treatment. Aikatherine becomes a portrait in female hysteria, whose unstructured utterance is better characterized as a rant than a speech. Bryennios casts Anna in a better light first by saying that she was clever and competent and then by making her speech more coherent. Only when rational arguments failed did she turn to tears and "intercessions." The initial martial vocabulary lets John resist a real assault, but it also gives her the compliment of being manly enough to mount a real assault.

Isaac's abdication and the lack of involvement of his brother John became

particularly sensitive topics for historians writing after the successful revolt of John's son Alexios. The depiction of these events was all the more significant because the reasons for Isaac's abdication are quite unclear. Psellos and Bryennios make the sole cause of Isaac's abdication the illness which he contracted while hunting. It was not uncommon for emperors to take monastic vows on their deathbeds as a means of atoning for the inevitable sins of power. The difficulty here is that Isaac did not die from this illness and no one expressed surprise that he survived. Psellos mentions that there was opposition to Isaac's fiscal discipline. Modern historians emphasize the political damage of the dispute Isaac had had with the patriarch and hold that he was somehow forced out of office.⁵¹ Byzantine emperors fought with patriarchs not infrequently, however, and generally won. Emperors also regularly weathered all sorts of opposition to their policies, fiscal and otherwise. Isaac seems to have faced no challenges through which other emperors did not persevere.

The orderliness of the transfer of power from Isaac to Constantine Doukas was also anomalous. Doukas did not become emperor by rebellion and acclamation by his troops. Rather he was simply given power by Isaac. Other Byzantine historians were struck that Isaac did not try to give that power to a member of his family, particularly when he had several male kinsmen of the appropriate age to choose from. Attaleiates and Skylitzes Continuatus both observe pointedly that Isaac passed over his brother John, his nephew and his son-in-law in order to offer imperial power to someone outside of his household.⁵² Clearly Isaac's choice to voluntarily bestow imperial power on another family was seen as an aberration. Isaac's unusual political choices were embarrassing to his nephew's regime and hence demanded careful historical treatment.

As one of Alexios' courtiers, Bryennios had strong motivation to make Isaac and John look like strong men. Isaac's abdication was a major embarrassment that needed to be written around. It is more difficult to explain why Psellos worked to preserve Isaac's masculinity, especially in light of the way he was willing to criticize and humiliate other former emperors, such as Zoe's husband Romanos. Psellos was one of Isaac's chief advisors – at least according to his own story – and may not have wanted to unduly undermine the reputation of the regime that had supported his career. He also worked closely with the following Doukas dynasty and may have felt the need to emphasize the legitimacy of Constantine Doukas' accession by creating a convincing, respectful, abdication scene for Isaac Komnenos. Although the Komnenos family lost control of the throne, they and their friends certainly remained influential in Constantinople. The same cannot be said of the emperors Psellos criticized so freely. These factors may have led him to create a scene for Isaac's abdication that made Isaac appear unequivocal in his desire to retire while simultaneously displaying the masculine virtues of strength and self-control.

Psellos and Bryennios do not quote Prokopios directly or even allude clearly to his history. Yet they play upon the same cultural logic that underlies Prokopios' skillful manipulation of gender norms. Theodora's story had prominence in the historical memory of later generations because Prokopios had created a powerful scene of a strong woman goading her weak husband into tyranny. Psellos drew on this historical memory and these gender norms when he made Isaac look strong by giving him a woman whose tears and arguments he could stoutly resist. Bryennios chose not to quote Psellos in this instance but rather redeployed the same rhetorical strategy in

order to burnish the image of the emperor's father. Both histories include episodes of female pleading because there was a danger of a man looking effeminate. The rhetorical trope of the goading woman became a graceful cover for male weakness and passivity by prompting a display of manly strength in resisting womanly influence.

One obvious and distressing conclusion is that we know less about a few Byzantine women than we had thought. These episodes have been interpreted as describing the forceful opinions of strong-willed women and have provided evidence for some standard interpretations of Byzantine political personalities. Numerous scholars have overlooked the misogyny of the Byzantine rhetoric and used these texts to create positive narratives about the agency of powerful Byzantine women.⁵³ If it is accepted that these women were described as having spoken in order to highlight the masculinity of their husbands, then we have no reason to expect that the events happened as they were described, and the histories cannot be taken as a guide to the women's personalities.⁵⁴

It is unsurprising that these women have been portrayed positively in twentieth-century scholarship, which was interested in recovering and exalting women's history. What is far more striking is that historians have almost universally accepted the force of the rhetorical arguments and concluded that the men were right to choose quiescence. The narrative that these men were forced out of power without any real choice has triumphed. That these men are universally depicted in modern histories as competent leaders facing impossible situations, rather than as timid and irresponsible, is, I believe, a tribute to the continued efficacy of this particular rhetorical strategy. It seems that on some level we still accept that any man who is able to ignore his wife cannot be a coward.

NOTES

- 1 Kazhdan and Wharton 1985: 99–102. See also Stephenson in this volume, ch. 2.
- 2 On the revival of Roman history see Markopoulos 2006; Magdalino 1983: 343. On Byzantine literary culture in general see Odorico and Agapitos 2002; Holmes and Waring 2002; Hunger 1989.
- 3 Bryennios 1975: 81 n. 11.
- 4 Fox and Livingstone 2007: 544–59; Kaldellis 2004: 29–32.
- 5 Winkler 1990: 5–8; Cantarella 1987: 38–51.
- 6 Clark 1994; Fischler 1994; Halperin 1990; Lardinois and McClure 2001.
- 7 Fisher 1984: 297–8.
- 8 James 2001: 20.
- 9 Brubaker 2005: 429.
- 10 Prokopios: I, 230, Book 1.24.33–4. See Dewing 1914.
- 11 Brubaker 2005: 430.
- 12 Prokopios: I, 232, Book 1.24.38. See Dewing 1914.
- 13 Clark 1994: 166.
- 14 Cooper 1992: 151.
- 15 Brubaker 2005: 430.
- 16 Kaldellis argues that Prokopios' *Wars* is as critical of Justinian as the *Secret History*: Kaldellis 2004. The *Buildings* also need not be read as panegyric: Rousseau 1998.
- 17 Prokopios: I, 232, Book 1.24.37, in Dewing 1914.
- 18 Evans 1984: 381; Diodorus Siculus, 14.8.5; Claudius Aelianus, 4.8; Isocrates, *Archidamus*, 45; Plutarch, *Cato Minor*, 24.8, *An seni res publica gerenda sit* 783.d.
- 19 Evans 1984: 382.
- 20 Kaldellis 2004: 36–8.

- 21 Prokopios: I, 237, Book 1.24.49–50, in Dewing 1914.
- 22 See e.g. Moorhead 1994: 47; Gregory 2005: 127; Mango 2002: 46.
- 23 Cameron 1985: 67–70.
- 24 Note that the number of dead had risen from 30,000 to 35,000 by the twelfth century. See Glykas 1836: 495–6.
- 25 Genesios 1978: 5, Book 2.4.
- 26 Skylitzes 1973: 8.
- 27 Laiou 1992: 166–7; Laiou 1994: 173; Holmes 2005: 89.
- 28 Kaldellis 2006: 3–10.
- 29 Magdalino 1993: 339–53; Mullett 1984: 180; Beaton 1996: 16–17, 225.
- 30 Bryennios 1975: 71, prologue 11; Anna Komnene: 7, Book 1.3. See now Reinsch and Kambylis 2001.
- 31 Psellos 1926–8: I, 48, Book 3.23. See also Sewter 1953.
- 32 Psellos 1926–8: I, 47, Book 3.21.
- 33 Perhaps the most famous discussion of this distinction is in Plato's *Symposium*, in Alcibiades' description of his efforts to seduce Socrates. Plato, *Symposium* 213e–222a. Although Plato and Aristotle use the lover/beloved distinction to talk about active and passive male lovers, it entered Hellenistic and later Greek discourse as a means of describing active male and passive female lovers, or, simply, men and women. The perceived sexual passivity of women is seen in ancient legislation: Cantarella 1987: 41.
- 34 Psellos 1926–8: I, 44–9, Book 3.18–23.
- 35 Psellos 1926–8: I, 49, Book 3.23.
- 36 Hill 1999: 59.
- 37 Psellos 1926–8: I, 55–6, Book 4.6–7.
- 38 North 1966; Hill 1996: 14; Kazhdan 1984a: 42–57; Munitiz 1995.
- 39 See Tougher in this volume.
- 40 Ringrose 2003b; Ringrose 2003a.
- 41 Psellos 1926–8: II, 73, Book 6.4.
- 42 Psellos 1926–8: II, 132, Book 7.80.
- 43 Alexiou 1974; Van Wees 1998; Amelang 2005.
- 44 Psellos 1926–8: II, 132–3, Book 7.81–3. I am grateful to Elizabeth Fisher for her help in clarifying points of this text.
- 45 Psellos 1926–8: II, 133, Book 7.23.
- 46 Bryennios 1975: 81, Book 1.4.
- 47 Bryennios 1975: 81–3, Book 1.4–5.
- 48 Psellos' speech for Aikatherine is not simply "reused" as Hill maintains. Hill 1999: 61.
- 49 Fischler 1994: 118.
- 50 Hill 1996: 8.
- 51 Ostrogorsky 1969: 341; Angold 1997: 75–7.
- 52 Attaleiates 1853: 69; Skylitzes Continuatus, in Tsolakes 1968: 108.
- 53 For example Skoulatos 1980: 78; Hill 1999: 61; Garland 1988; Garland 1994: 37–8, 270–2.
- 54 Similar conclusions have had great influence on the study of late antique women: Clark 1998a; Clark 1998b; Clark 2001; Brakke 2003; Martin and Miller 2005.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHERCHEZ L'HOMME!

Byzantine men: a eunuch perspective



Shaun Tougher

Men dominate accounts of Byzantine history. As emperors, administrators, soldiers, clergy, monks, writers, traders, artisans and peasants they are inescapable. But when it comes to the subject of men as men, Byzantine men vanish. It is Byzantine women who bask in the attention of Byzantinists. In the first decade of the twenty-first century there have already appeared the general study of Connor and the edited volumes of Kalavrezou and Garland.¹ Empresses in particular have reason to feel appreciated: obviously the flavour of the late twentieth century, within a short period of time they were the subject of a string of monographs.² This striking instance is made all the more peculiar by the fact that the field does not even have the equivalent of Fergus Millar's *The Emperor in the Roman World*.³ It seems that Byzantine studies is playing the usual game of catch up; the field of Classics and Ancient History, for instance, has already witnessed a series of volumes placing Roman men and masculinity under the microscope.⁴

This is not to say that Byzantine men have been totally ignored. Although the 1997 edited volume *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium* is primarily devoted to women there is one contribution on men, Charles Barber's "Homo byzantinus?"⁵ The term *homo byzantinus* itself derives from Alexander Kazhdan's attempt to place the ordinary Byzantine, the common man, to the fore.⁶ In his chapter Barber identifies the lack of study of men as men in Byzantine studies. He asserts that "The conceptualisation of men in Byzantium is not a developed area of study" and notes that the *ODB* does not even have an entry for Men. Barber declares that his purpose is "to raise the possibility of an investigation of masculinity in Byzantium."⁷ He attempts to do this primarily by analysing two specific eleventh-century texts, one visual, one verbal: the famous image of the emperor in the *Psalter of Basil II* and the *Precepts and Anecdotes* of Kekaumenos, a work of advice from a father to his son. He declares that the image of the emperor "betrays the gendered discourse of power in Byzantium. [It] is exclusively masculine in its terms" (though he rather sidelines the role of the archangels Michael and Gabriel in the image). As for Kekaumenos, Barber argues that "he is fashioning a masculine model for his son," and observes that he "both manipulates and is manipulated by a homocentric discourse that can express social negotiation only in terms of a competition between

men.” Barber shows that Byzantine men did not necessarily live up to the masculine ideal, and hopes to have demonstrated that “a discussion of masculinities can supplement the research into the interplay of power and gender in Byzantium.”⁸

However, Byzantinists have been slow to follow Barber’s lead. Eight years later, in a chapter on gender in a guide to the field of Byzantine studies, Dion Smythe notes that “The questions raised first by Barber . . . have not as yet been taken much further,” and this despite the development of Men’s studies generally.⁹ Unsurprisingly Smythe himself has edited a volume entitled *Byzantine Men*.¹⁰ In 1999 he also published an article on same-sex desire, in which he pointedly took issue with Kazhdan’s definition of Byzantium’s average person. He comments:

Presenting the common attributes of the ordinary Byzantine Kazhdan writes, “No-one will deny that *homo byzantinus*, like people of all times, had two legs, needed food, married and raised children”. However, by two of his four criteria Kazhdan renders as “queer” monks, nuns, bishops and the childless.¹¹

One might also add eunuchs; while they can be counted under the category of childless, significantly they were not even allowed to marry in the first place. However, eunuchs might be more readily considered as queer anyway.

Intriguingly, eunuchs comprise the one group of Byzantine men who have received sustained attention. The significant place of eunuchs in Byzantine society has long been recognized; the barbed comments of Gibbon and Lecky spring readily to mind.¹² (The negative stereotypical view of Byzantium as an empire dominated by wicked women and evil eunuchs is infamous, but it is notable that it is the subjects of women and eunuchs that dominate research on Byzantine gender.) Given the role of eunuchs in Byzantine society as imperial servants and administrators, it is no surprise that their institutional history has been the subject of extensive treatment, such as the studies by Dunlap, Guiland and Hopkins.¹³ More recently, however, other aspects of eunuchs have caught the eye of Byzantinists, notably their wider roles and their gender identity.¹⁴ In particular, both Ringrose and I have published a series of articles and a monograph each on the subject, with Ringrose arguing that in the middle Byzantine period eunuchs were constructed positively as a third gender while I argue for a more fluid construction of eunuchs.¹⁵

Thus, as far as eunuchs are concerned, there has been significant recent work on gender identity in the field of Byzantine studies. In this chapter I do not intend to invent the wheel for Byzantine Men’s studies but rather, like Barber, to provide some stimulation towards much-needed further study. I will raise questions about men by focusing on the especial group of eunuchs. As Kuefler has observed, eunuchs are good to think with.¹⁶ What do their natures, roles and social relations tell us about other men? Can eunuchs even be considered as a group of men? Were there in fact many different categories of men? For the purposes of this chapter I will concentrate on three aspects which may be considered as core for male identity: body, career and family. I will focus mainly on the middle Byzantine period to prevent the analysis from becoming too disparate. I will not be concerned only with gender identity, but wish to explore also the social roles and relationships of men, and stress the variety of experience. One of the clear problems in studying men is the danger of generalization.

I begin with the body. How did the physical nature of eunuchs affect their status as men? One assumes that the majority of eunuchs in the Byzantine empire were males who had been castrated prior to puberty. It was only these individuals who would have the classic physical markers of the eunuch: foremost a high-pitched voice and beardlessness, but also increased proportions, as limbs were elongated since the ends of long bones did not close. Not all males were castrated prior to puberty, of course, and examples include those castrated as punishment (bishops convicted of pederasty under Justinian I) or to exclude them from imperial office (the sons of Michael I and Leo V).¹⁷ Nor were all eunuchs created purposely; we hear of cases where children's genitals were damaged (the sixth-century general Solomon), and some were born eunuchs, whom we would now call intersex (for example, Gabriel, a distinguished monk in Palestine in the fifth century).¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is likely that most eunuchs would have been physically distinctive from other adult men, notably in their lack of a beard, which became *de rigueur* for Byzantine men from around the seventh century. It is telling that in his *Kletorologion*, Philotheos uses the term "bearded" to signify non-eunuch males who held titles and offices.¹⁹

How did a lack of facial hair affect the status of eunuchs as men? Byzantine writers may equate eunuchs with women because of their physical appearance. Monastic texts may warn of the danger of the presence in monasteries of eunuchs who have faces like women, such as the aforementioned Gabriel whom Sabas segregated from the other monks.²⁰ Leo Choirospaktes, the distinguished intellectual and ambassador active during the reign of Leo VI (886–912), asserted that a eunuch was like a being born of two women.²¹ Notably the diplomat accuses the eunuch of having engaged in sexual improprieties during an embassy to Baghdad. Not only could eunuchs be perceived as a temptation to men because of their more feminine appearance, they could be likened to women in their nature also: as corrupt. However, bearded men could be thought effeminate too, and eunuchs could be praised for masculine qualities. The thirteenth-century historian George Akropolites deploys gender as part of his political agenda, characterizing Theodore II Laskaris as effeminate and contrasting him with his masculine hero Michael Palaiologos.²² And although he was castrated as a boy, Ignatios the Younger (twice patriarch in the ninth century) was praised by his hagiographer for his mastery of his passions and his courage.²³

In relation to beards, a thought-provoking article by Bjørnholt and James deals with gender identity in Byzantium, addressing in particular the depiction of eunuchs in art, especially in the *Madrid Skylitzes*, probably dating to the twelfth century and produced in Norman Sicily.²⁴ Bjørnholt and James observe that characters identified as eunuchs, such as Theodore Krateros, who unseated an Arab horseman during a joust in the hippodrome in Constantinople, and John the *orphanotrophos*, the infamous emperor-maker, are illustrated as having beards.²⁵ They suggest that a reason for this may be that the artist is attempting to demonstrate masculinity rather than physical reality: "a beard may be a definition of manliness, rather than a sign of 'a man'." Yet since they say that all men in the *Madrid Skylitzes* are shown with beards this assertion becomes problematic. Presumably not all the men depicted in the manuscript are manly. While a case for the manliness of Theodore Krateros can be made (a key point of the story is that a eunuch could confound expectations of unmanliness), why, for instance, should John the *orphanotrophos* be considered

manly by the artist?²⁶ Further, as Bjørnholt and James themselves point out, in Byzantine art other male beings, namely angels and youthful male saints, can “bear indications of what we might see as feminine gender characteristics,” for example smooth faces. Thus a beard was not necessarily a method of demonstrating manliness. In the case of youthful male saints presumably the lack of a beard was meant to indicate that they were not fully adult. In addition, the iconography for these beardless male saints may have been established when beards had not yet become essential.²⁷

The case of the depiction of angels is particularly relevant to eunuchs, since these two types of being were often associated in Byzantine thought.²⁸ In dreams and visions angels were mistaken for eunuchs of the earthly court. On the face of it, the strength of the *topos* lies in the fact that angels and eunuchs fulfilled similar roles at the celestial and earthly courts.²⁹ They were the ever-present guardians of their master, and they were his special agents. Angels were the paradigms for eunuchs (or maybe vice versa). But the parallel goes deeper and relates to their physical nature. In his study of the representation of angels in Byzantine art, Peers characterizes angels as “a kind of third body – in nature somewhere between God and humanity, but with a nature not fully determinable.”³⁰ The relevance of these views to eunuchs, though not pursued by Peers, is obvious. This is not to say that angels (or eunuchs) necessarily lacked masculinity. This is particularly evident in depictions of the Archangel Michael as a warrior, in his role as chief general of the angels. Indeed in the depiction of Basil II in his *Psalter* Michael is shown handing the emperor his lance, an action described in the accompanying poem.³¹ It is also important to note, however, that angels could be models for other men, not just eunuchs. For instance, the monastic existence could be described as “the angelic life.”³² Further, non-eunuch administrators in the imperial service could be likened to angels.³³

It is clear, then, that when studying men the reading of the body can be more nuanced than one might imagine. The need for greater sensitivity to complexity is also required when it comes to the questions of careers and families. Regarding the former topic, it can be asked, what career options did eunuchs have in Byzantine society? In comparison to other men were they limited to specific functions, or could they in fact have more opportunities than other men? Did all men experience a variety of options? The key careers for eunuchs were, of course, at court. After all, imperial and royal courts have been the major reason for the existence of eunuchs throughout history. As Hopkins has emphasized, it was the assignment of eunuchs to the position of chamberlain (*cubicularius*) in the later Roman empire that cemented their position in the imperial system.³⁴ Eunuchs are often thought of in the specific role of body servants of rulers (and other members of the elite) but in reality they could fulfil a range of functions in the service of the court. For instance, they could be treasurers and commanders, undertake special missions and operate beyond the confines of the court. The most famous eunuch general is Narses, who in the sixth century defeated the Ostrogoths and became governor of Italy.³⁵ Narses, who had also been treasurer (*sacellarius*) and grand chamberlain (*praepositus sacri cubiculi*), is just the most notable of many to hold military office.³⁶ Ringrose has declared that neither Prokopios nor Agathias “attributes his success to traditional courageous manliness” and that they emphasize his intelligence and skill instead,³⁷ but Agathias

does indeed praise Narses for his courage (*andreia*),³⁸ and it is striking that both Prokopios and Agathias laud his dynamism (*drasterios*),³⁹ especially since this was attributed to prominent eunuchs in the middle period but also to other men, such as that famed commander (and future emperor) Nikephoros Phokas.⁴⁰

The diversity of positions available to eunuchs in the imperial service is made clear by Philotheos, who lists the eunuch-only jobs (as well as titles), but then reveals that eunuchs could also fill all the other posts available to the bearded (with some exceptions, noted below).⁴¹ For this reason, eunuchs had greater opportunities for power. Yet the danger of seeing eunuchs just as agents of the imperial court must be recognized. In her argument that eunuchs were acculturated to a positive third gender identity in Byzantium, Ringrose utilizes the argument that their dress was distinct from the dress of other men.⁴² Philotheos does indicate that the costume of eunuch *patrikioi* and *protospatharioi* had more elaborate decoration than that of their bearded counterparts,⁴³ but this does not necessarily mean that eunuchs formed a third gender; Philotheos is clear that the language of dress was generally vital for identifying titles, both eunuch and bearded.⁴⁴ But even if one accepts Ringrose's argument – and interestingly she raises the possibility that there were in fact more than three genders in Byzantine society: what gender, for instance, did the religious constitute, with their distinct forms of dress and behaviour? – the important point is that it is only relevant to court eunuchs; it does not apply to all eunuchs in Byzantine society. Like other men, eunuchs had other options available to them: they are found, for instance, as clerics, monks, singers, teachers and doctors.

Conversely, one also has to recognize that there were limitations on the positions eunuchs could fill. As noted above, Philotheos asserted that eunuchs were not able to hold the positions of eparch (city prefect of Constantinople), quaestor (judge and legislator) and the varied types of *domestikos* (senior military officer). Why eunuchs should be excluded from these posts is elusive. Bury suggested that it was because these posts were ones with “ancient associations and prestige”;⁴⁵ Guiland proffered that it was a matter of protocol;⁴⁶ Ringrose argues that as the eparch was “father of the city” it was an inappropriate office for a eunuch, but nevertheless notes that in the seventh century the eunuch Gregory did hold the post.⁴⁷ Moreover, these restrictions did not necessarily persist, for in the eleventh century there are several instances of eunuchs becoming *domestikoi* of the *scholai*.⁴⁸ It should also be noted that sometimes non-eunuchs themselves could fill positions that were meant to be reserved for eunuchs. The most famous case is that of Basil the Macedonian, who in the ninth century became the *parakoimomenos* of Michael III. Interestingly, this can help elucidate the exact nature of the relationship between Michael and Basil.⁴⁹

It is notorious that eunuchs were also ineligible for the position of emperor, as Psellos declares in relation to Basil Lekapenos, the bastard son of Romanos I Lekapenos (920–44).⁵⁰ This is a reason often given for rulers trusting eunuchs: they did not have to fear being replaced by them and so could trust them implicitly. However, eunuchs were quite capable of plotting on behalf of others, and Staurakios is alleged to have considered making himself emperor.⁵¹ It is interesting to consider why eunuchs were deemed inappropriate to be emperors. One might imagine that it was associated with the question of masculinity, but, as we have seen, eunuchs could possess this virtue, and could be accepted as active military leaders.⁵² Perhaps it was connected to the expectation that emperors should establish dynasties and produce

male heirs, preferably sons. Since eunuchs were unable to father children this would rule them out, and in this regard it is significant that monks and clerics, who were ostensibly celibate, could not become emperors either. There may be other factors at play too, concerning for example the legal status of eunuchs. This deserves further exploration. Was an emperor meant to be physically undamaged? We return to the question of the body. Mutilation – not just castration, but blinding, tongue cutting and nose slitting – was deployed to exclude men from imperial power.⁵³ To bar the brothers of Leo IV they were initially made priests, but then tongue cutting as well as blinding was resorted to.⁵⁴ Yet mutilation was not necessarily efficacious, as is seen in the case of Justinian II, who returned to power in 705 despite the fact that when he had been overthrown in 695 both his nose and his tongue had been cut off.⁵⁵

At the other end of the social scale to the position of emperor, eunuchs are equally unlikely to be peasants. One cannot be sure given the absence of evidence, but it seems probable that most eunuchs (either deliberate, accidental or by birth) were sent to Constantinople by their families for a potentially lucrative court career or ecclesiastical career, given the special status eunuchs could enjoy in church contexts. Equally it would be surprising to find eunuchs among the rank and file of the Byzantine army; they might have commanded armies, but this role tended to result from having served the emperor in different capacities at court already, as seen in the case of Narses.

In terms of careers for men, then, eunuchs demonstrate a greater range than one might expect, but also with some particular limitations. To a degree this reflects the fact that eunuchs were a special group of men in society, who could experience great social mobility. But the same could be said for other men, who came into the orbit of the court, or distinguished themselves as effective clergy or impressive monks. Such men could also have had certain limitations placed upon their careers. Further, it can be imagined that since most men in the empire would have been peasants they would have experienced few vocational options.

Finally we turn to the question of family. Kazhdan identified marriage and parenthood, the fundamentals of family life, as essential concerns for most Byzantines. But what was the eunuch experience of family? How different was it to the experience of other men? Is this a key factor in isolating them from non-eunuch men? As has already been indicated, eunuchs were not allowed to marry. In his law on the matter Leo VI asserted that this was because the purpose of marriage was to have children.⁵⁶ But, as Smythe has indicated, other men did not necessarily marry either. One thinks of monks, although men might have married before entering monasteries. One also thinks of the high clergy; it was preferred that they were not married. It was possible for other men to remain unmarried. The most infamous (and unusual) case is that of the emperor Basil II (976–1025), which has puzzled Byzantinists, given the dynastic impulse of most rulers. Tellingly, Basil's resistance to marriage has raised questions about his sexuality, but it is possible that he had other reasons for his choice.⁵⁷ Indeed, perhaps "choice" is the key word here. Most men could choose to marry, but eunuchs could not. And yet can we be sure that some eunuchs did not marry, even if it meant breaking the law? It is interesting that Leo VI felt the need to legislate on the matter; was his law elicited by eunuchs seeking the right to marry, or even by cases of actual marriage? It is known that in other societies eunuchs could marry (e.g. in China) and married despite laws against it (e.g. the *castrati*).⁵⁸ One of

the odd features of Claudian's invectives on Eutropius, the grand chamberlain of Arcadius (395–408), is that he refers to an individual whom he calls the wife (as well as sister) of the eunuch.⁵⁹

Connected with the question of marriage is the issue of parenthood. Eunuchs were unable to have children, which might be assumed to have affected their status as men, but it is clear that married couples could be childless too (like Justinian I and Theodora), as is recognized by Leo VI. Being unmarried did not prevent single men from having children, but there were non-eunuch single men who did not have children, such as certain clergy, monks and Basil II. Moreover, while biological paternity was neither sought nor experienced by all men in Byzantine society, there were other means of establishing paternal relationships. Although Leo VI would not allow eunuchs to marry he was sympathetic enough to their plight to allow them to adopt.⁶⁰ Certainly Nikephoros Bryennios records that in the latter half of the eleventh century the eunuch John the *protovestiarior*s declared his intention to adopt the adult George Palaiologos.⁶¹ Other cases of eunuchs utilizing fictive kinship (such as godparenthood and fostering) to form social bonds are recorded.⁶² Like other men, eunuchs were alert to the value of creating such social bonds. Relationships established in religious contexts could also provide the opportunity for eunuchs, just as for other men, to draw on familial exemplars: clerics and monks could be “fathers,” “sons,” “brothers,” “uncles” and “nephews.” One must not forget also that since eunuchs could be from native Byzantine families the opportunity for strong relations with family members was a possibility: the extended family of John the *orphanotrophos* comes to mind.⁶³ In addition, the marriage of siblings allowed for the extension of family relationships: one thinks of the sister of Constantine the Paphlagonian marrying Leo Phokas.⁶⁴ However, the relationship between eunuch uncles and their nephews would be particularly interesting to study further: this was the closest eunuchs got to having biological sons. Equally, the attitude of other men (both secular and religious) to such relationships deserves to be explored too.⁶⁵ In regards to family, then, on the face of it eunuchs look like a very distinct group of men, but once again there is room for nuance. Further, the relationships experienced by eunuchs raise questions about the relationships experienced by other men too.

In this chapter, I have highlighted the dearth of studies of men as men by Byzantinists. I have attempted to illuminate the subject by focusing on a distinct group of men who have received sustained attention, and also by restricting the analysis to three key areas: body, career and family. In exploring these areas in relation to eunuchs questions also arose about men more generally. Eunuchs can appear to be a very peculiar type of man, whose body, careers and experience of family marked them out as different and distinct from other men. However, while they do have their especial qualities, they can share qualities and experiences with other men. More fundamentally, they highlight the varieties that could exist in the experience of Byzantine men, and underline the need to be alert to the danger of generalization. Above all, eunuchs remind us of the need to study men as men. Only by devoting to men the same attention that has been lavished on women will we be able to appreciate fully the nature of Byzantine society. In fact it is vital that the sexes are not studied in isolation; the comparison with the experience of women can be instructive. Unlike women, eunuchs could hold political office, lead armies, have ecclesiastical

careers, and be teachers and doctors (though women could attain imperial status). Considered in this light, there can be no doubt that in Byzantine society eunuchs were counted among men.

NOTES

- 1 Connor 2004; Kalavrezou 2003; Garland 2006a.
- 2 Garland 1999; Hill 1999; Herrin 2001; James 2001.
- 3 Millar 1992 [1977]. See, however, Dagron 2003a.
- 4 E.g. Gleason 1995; Foxhall and Salmon 1998; Williams 1999; Gunderson 2000; Kuefler 2001; McDonnell 2006. Note also the important work of medievalists on men and masculinity: Wilfong 2007: 312–13.
- 5 Barber 1997.
- 6 Kazhdan and Constable 1982. Kazhdan's definition has become something to kick against, or at least bounce off: Barber 1997, 185–6, highlights its inadequacy, and see also Smythe 1999: 140; Bjørnholt and James 2007: 51–2.
- 7 Barber 1997: 186.
- 8 Barber 1997: 195.
- 9 Smythe 2005: 164. See also the comments of Wilfong 2007, esp. 312–13 and 321–2. On gender and masculinity see also Vinson 1998: 485–515.
- 10 Smythe forthcoming.
- 11 Smythe 1999: 140.
- 12 See Tougher 2008: 4 and 14–15.
- 13 Dunlap 1924; Guiland 1943, 1944 and especially 1967, vol. 1: 165–380, which collects his studies; Hopkins 1963 and 1978: 172–96.
- 14 See especially Sidéris 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003. See also Gaul 2002 on eunuchs of the late Byzantine period, Moran 2002 on eunuchs as singers and Mullett 2002 on Theophylact of Ochrid's *In Defence of Eunuchs*. See now also Holman 2008 on Meletius the monk's views on the gender identity of eunuchs.
- 15 Ringrose 1994, 1996, 1999, 2003a and 2003b; Tougher 1997a, 1999a, 1999b, 2002b, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2006 and 2008.
- 16 Kuefler 2001: 14 and 36. See also my previous attempt: Tougher 1999b.
- 17 Tougher 1999b: 94 and 95.
- 18 Solomon: Prokopios, *Wars* 3.11.6, in Dewing 1990, 1916: 102; Gabriel: Tougher 2006: 240.
- 19 Oikonomides 1972: 135.9.
- 20 Tougher 2006: 239–40.
- 21 In Kolias 1939: 121–7, esp. 121.12–21.
- 22 Macrides 2007: 62.
- 23 Tougher 2004a: 101.
- 24 Bjørnholt and James 2007, esp. 53–5.
- 25 Bjørnholt and James also question the assumption that beardless adult males in Byzantine art can be read as eunuchs, but I would argue that their case is problematic, and I hope to discuss it elsewhere. Their article in fact demonstrates that depicting an adult male without a beard was highly significant. The real question that emerges from their article is, why in the *Madrid Skylitzes* specifically eunuchs are depicted with beards. On the depiction of “eunuchs” in art see also Dumitrescu 1987; Buckton and Hetherington 2006; and Tougher 2008: 112–15.
- 26 One might also ask then, why are masculine women not depicted with beards?
- 27 On the appearance of warrior saints see Walter 2003: 285–8.
- 28 E.g. Ringrose 2003a: 142–62.
- 29 See Woodfin in this volume.
- 30 Peers 2001: 109.
- 31 For the text of the poem see Ševčenko 1962: 272 n. 92. See also the striking icon in the treasury of St Mark's depicting Michael as a warrior surrounded by warrior saints: Walter 2003: 103 and plate 1.
- 32 E.g. Morris 1995: 32 and n. 4. She observes that “The concept of *angelikos bios* deserves its own study.”

- 33 Kelly 2004: 232–8.
- 34 Hopkins 1963 and 1978: 172–96. See also Stevenson 1995, and Tougher 2008: 36–53.
- 35 E.g. Fauber 1990.
- 36 E.g. Ringrose 2003a: 131–41.
- 37 Ringrose 1994: 97.
- 38 Agathias 1.16.2, in Keydell 1967: 30.
- 39 Prokopios, *Wars* 6.13.16, in Dewing 1993, 1919: 402; Agathias 1.16.1, in Keydell 1967: 30.
- 40 As noted regarding Leo the Deacon's depiction of Basil Lekapenos and Nikephoros Phokas: Talbot and Sullivan 2005: 70 n. 6 and 143 n. 8.
- 41 Oikonomides 1972: 135.9–10.
- 42 Ringrose 2003a: 80–1. On the issue of dress see also James and Tougher 2005.
- 43 See Oikonomides 1972: 93.12–14 (insignia of bearded *protospatharios*) and 127.18–22 (insignia of eunuch *protospatharios*).
- 44 Tougher 2008: 109–11.
- 45 Bury 1911: 74.
- 46 Guiland 1944: 186, and 1967, vol. 1: 198.
- 47 Ringrose 2003a: 183 and n. 77.
- 48 As Guiland 1944: 186, and 1967, vol. 1: 198, pointed out.
- 49 Some Byzantinists conjecture that Michael and Basil were lovers, and perhaps the close physical proximity suggested by the office of *parakoimomenos* supports this: e.g. Tougher 1999c: 157.
- 50 Psellos, *Chronographia* 1.3, in Renauld 1926: 3.
- 51 Theophanes, A.M. 6292, in Mango and Scott 1997: 652–3.
- 52 It is familiar that Byzantine empresses who ruled in their own right tended to rely on eunuchs as their generals (e.g. James 2001: 68, on the example of Eirene), though emperors also deployed eunuchs in this way.
- 53 E.g. Herrin 2000.
- 54 Theophanes, A.M. 6273, 6284 and 6291, in Mango and Scott 1997: 627, 643 and 651.
- 55 Theophanes, A.M. 6187, in Mango and Scott 1997: 515.
- 56 Leo VI, *Novel* 98, in Noailles and Dain 1944: 321–7.
- 57 E.g. a monastic vow: Arbagi 1975, and Holmes 2005: 45 n. 60. It is striking that marriages were not arranged for Basil's nieces either while he was alive.
- 58 See Tougher 2008: 17 and 45–6.
- 59 See Long 1996: 133–4. The proposed marriage between Theoktistos and Theodora (or one of her daughters) also comes to mind: Guiland 1943: 220. If this story has any validity it need not mean that Theoktistos was not a eunuch.
- 60 Leo VI, *Novel* 26, in Noailles and Dain 1944: 101–5.
- 61 Bryennios 4.38, in Gautier 1975: 309.
- 62 See Tougher 2008: 46–7. On fictive kinship in Byzantium see Macrides 1999, studies I–III.
- 63 E.g. Tougher 2008: 65–6.
- 64 E.g. Tougher 2008: 66.
- 65 E.g. Bremmer 1983, which does discuss the relationship between a mother's brother and her son.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ON SLAVES AND SLAVERY*

—♦—
Günter Prinzing

Only rarely is there any mention at all of slavery or even of slaves in the world of the Byzantines, in recent accounts of Byzantine history.¹ Hence the question arises, why is this particular group of the Byzantine population so largely neglected? On the one hand it seems to be due to the fact that to date we do not have a satisfactory, comprehensive monograph on slavery in Byzantium that carefully examines the traces of slavery in the many and varied sources over the whole Byzantine millennium.² There are, notably, very clear references to the existence of slaves in Byzantium in legal texts, documents especially and records, but also in hagiographic texts.³ On the other hand, slaves are rarely mentioned explicitly, and are in general not easy to distinguish from free servants, in historiographical works, chronicles and other narrative sources. The reason for this is ambiguous terminology.⁴ Without a more exact or careful interpretation, as we shall see, we cannot make much headway. Moreover, in certain fields the possibilities for research will always remain restricted by the notorious lack of an adequate number of sources. However, some areas can be approached, for example the extent of the employment of slaves in the sphere of the imperial court or in various “state-controlled” production-workshops in urban or rural regions outside Constantinople, and in the private sector of Byzantine society, which has still not been exhaustively examined; and the living conditions of slaves in the Byzantine empire, which may yet receive adequate treatment.⁵

Basic results of research into slavery in the Byzantine empire between the sixth and fifteenth centuries can be summarized as follows:

- I Byzantine society inherited from the Romans the ancient distinction between free human beings and slaves, which basically continued to exist throughout the whole Byzantine millennium. This distinction was legally regulated and formulated, in all its consequences, by the legislation of Justinian I (527–65), in the *Corpus juris civilis* (CJC), and of his predecessors since Constantine the Great, which has come down to us largely in the form of the *Codex Theodosianus* promulgated in 439 by Theodosius II.⁶ Though the legal codes and novels (*nearai*) of later emperors modified, amended or abolished several of Justinian’s regulations concerning slaves,⁷ many regulations of the CJC did remain in force,

since the latter was transformed into the great collection of laws called the *Basilika*, completed under Emperor Leo VI (886–912),⁸ and were adopted by other lawbooks or legal compilations of the middle and late Byzantine periods.

- 2 So it is hardly surprising that mention of slaves and slavery is clearest in the collections of imperial codes of laws or in legal texts of the emperors. These are from the seventh century onwards: the *Ecloga*,⁹ the *Basilika* and the *Prochiron*¹⁰ on the one hand; and the novels after Justinian, especially those of Leo VI,¹¹ on the other hand, but also in treaties, such as those with Arabs or the Kievan Rus,¹² or the famous *Book of the Eparch* of Leo VI, a collection of regulations concerning social and economic life in Constantinople,¹³ and in canon law.¹⁴ Also of great value, alongside the *Book of the Eparch*,¹⁵ is the so-called *Peira* (mid-eleventh century), a text containing “a collection of excerpts from the statements of verdict . . . and special treatises” by the judge Eustathios Rhomaios.¹⁶
- 3 Fundamental criticism of slavery was expressed very rarely and only to a certain degree (the exceptions are Gregory of Nyssa [d. 395, cf. his *Opera* V, *In ecclesiasten*, or. IV] and later Archbishop Eustathios of Thessalonika [d. c. 1195]), but it remained without any general consequences in practice.¹⁷ However, the nasty concomitants of slavery or attacks on slaves were repeatedly observed and criticized, most clearly by the Fathers of the Church John Chrysostom (d. 404) and Basil the Great (d. 379).¹⁸
- 4 The terminology for slaves (or servants respectively) is based on the classical tradition, hence it is diverse and often ambivalent: apart from *doulos/doule*, we come across the terms *therapon/therapaina*, *oiketes/oiketis*, *oikogenes*, *pais*, *paidiske* and *threptos/e*; but also the neutral forms *andrapodon* (the only expression, which always clearly designates a slave, cf. also below), *paidarion*, *psycharion*, *soma* and *threptarion*. However, it has to be repeated that it is often not sufficiently clear whether one of those terms mentioned unambiguously designates a person as being a slave in the legal sense. In this connection, we should bear in mind that there is only documentary evidence for the Greek term *sklavos* in the sense of *slave* from the eleventh century onwards.¹⁹
- 5 Slaves, often including eunuchs, were employed mainly in the imperial palaces and workshops, but also in ecclesiastical properties (monasteries) and in private households of more or less wealthy people.²⁰ If mass slave labour on large estates (whether owned by institutions or by powerful families or people) still existed in the early Byzantine era, it would seem to have greatly diminished (at least in certain regions) already in the sixth century, but generally thereafter.²¹ However, the number of slaves used in this sector would seem to have increased once more between the second half of the eighth century and the early eleventh century, before declining again.²²
- 6 The supply and also the reproduction of slaves were ensured mostly by prisoners of war,²³ house births (by the slaves themselves)²⁴ and the slave trade.²⁵ The prices to be paid for slaves fluctuated between 20 and 100 *nomismata* (later *hyperpyra*) from Justinian’s time until 1453.²⁶ Compared with this, the price of 400 *nomismata* is wholly incredible: according to the preserved will of the Cappadocian lord and *protospatharios* Eustathios Boilas (eleventh century), he had paid this price for a certain Zoe, who was seemingly his favourite female slave, since he freed her in his will. In all probability the price mentioned is due to

an error by a scribe or copyist who, in my opinion, wrote an *ypsilon* (as a number = 400) instead of a *koppa* (= 90).²⁷ The centres of the slave trade were the Crimea and Constantinople, where there was a special slave marketplace, but slaves could also be purchased in provincial cities of the empire.²⁸ The Italian maritime cities also became increasingly involved in the Mediterranean slave trade (from the ninth century on).²⁹

- 7 Manumission (*manumissio/apoleutherosis*), that is to say the grant of freedom by the owner of the slaves, continued to be practised, especially in testamentary dispositions (wills). The possibilities for this were expanded at the Church's instigation. Despite the abolition of all legal disadvantages, the released hardly ever found full social acceptance.³⁰
- 8 A female slave formally married by her lord received her liberty, and her children were supposed to be regarded as legitimate (since Justinian). However, slaves were not able to contract a fully valid marriage among themselves. Only a blessing of the slaves' marriage in church was permitted by Alexios I Komnenos at the end of the eleventh century.³¹

The interpretation of narrative texts in the field of historiography in its broader sense (i.e. including chronicles) with the aim of finding any evidence there of slaves, often proves to be difficult, and even frustrating. The reason lies in the fact that we are often confronted with an ambiguity of terms without being able to decide clearly whether we are dealing with a slave or a free servant. With respect to this terminological problem and the fact that up to now we still lack a thorough, comprehensive study of the role slaves play in these kinds of narrative sources,³² it seems appropriate here to present the reader with some selected source passages: they may serve not only to elucidate the problems just mentioned, but also to warn the reader against adopting uncritically traditional, apparently still valid, interpretations.

NIKEPHOROS, *SHORT HISTORY*

The first text is taken from the *Short History* of Patriarch Nikephoros (d. 828). Right at the beginning (chapter 3), the author reports the following event. When Eudokia, the first wife of Emperor Herakleios died of epilepsy on 13 August 612 and was to be buried,

it happened that a girl – she was the servant (*therapaina*) of one of the citizens – leaned out from an upper floor and spat unguardedly into the air. Her expectoration landed on the splendid vestment in which the empress's corpse was enveloped. Whereupon, those taking part in the funeral became incensed: they apprehended the girl and condemned her to death by fire, in the manner of barbarians, sacrilegious men that they were.

The mistress of the servant girl (= *tes oiketidos*) was also to be punished in the same manner, but escaped unseen.³³ Now, the suspicion arises that the girl, marked by the terms *therapaina* or *oiketis* and sentenced to death by fire (apparently on account of the crime of *lèse-majesté*), was a slave, but we cannot truly be certain.

Mango's translation would be fully supported by the secondary literature, since

neither P. Speck nor W. Kaegi see the unfortunate girl as a slave.³⁴ Nevertheless, this possibility cannot be ruled out *a priori* from the context and the terminology, since we also have to bear in mind that the girl was a barbarian (as is attested in L Ms. of the text), who may have been bought by her owners (we only hear of her mistress) at the capital's slave market. The important point is that terms are used which just as often (and perhaps more frequently than we are inclined to believe) serve as the designation for slaves as can also denote free servant women (see also below).

KEDRENOS (AND OSTROGORSKY)

Turning to the next text,³⁵ it seems, by way of exception, to be more instructive for our purpose first to quote the interpretation of the source by George Ostrogorsky instead of the source itself. There he writes, *inter alia*, as follows about Emperor Basil II:

His radicalism had the further consequence of leading him to disregard the demands of right and justice. This is illustrated by the case of Eustathios Maleinos, a former comrade in arms of Bardas Phocas, whose hospitality Basil had claimed on his return from his Syrian campaign. The remarkable wealth of this Cappadocian magnate, his enormous estates and, *above all, the number of his slaves and other dependants* [my italics] who were capable of forming a military contingent of several thousand men, all impressed themselves so much on the emperor that he invited his host to Constantinople and held him there in honourable captivity. His property was confiscated by the state.³⁶

The quotation is one of the not particularly numerous, but nonetheless sufficiently clear, references in Ostrogorsky's work to the continued existence of slavery in Byzantium,³⁷ and certainly the most remarkable of these references. The great scholar would here seem to provide us with apparently particularly impressive evidence of the fact that slavery in Byzantium had not only by no means been abolished, but was still being practised on a massive scale even in the tenth century, for instance in the case of large landowners in Anatolia. Despite the surprising fact that Ostrogorsky here – quite contrary to his usual habit – does not provide any further documentary evidence for his statement, it becomes clear³⁸ that his statement is based on a passage from the world chronicle compiled by George Kedrenos.³⁹

With regard to this source, which extends to 1057, it must be taken into account that for the period from 811 on, Kedrenos copied for the most part from the chronicle by John Skylitzes. Hence the passage he dealt with here in fact goes back to Skylitzes, the first edition of which only appeared in 1973. Now, what do we read in Skylitzes in the said passage? Nothing other than these few lines: "The Magistros Eustathios Maleinos received him [the emperor] on his passage through Cappadocia on his [Maleinos'] own estate with his [the emperor's] whole army (*panstrati*) . . ."⁴⁰ But where are the numerous slaves we expect to be mentioned? Unlike Ostrogorsky (and his "disciples"),⁴¹ I can find no direct or indirect clues from the passage in question for the assumption that slaves were employed in large numbers on the estates of Eustathios Maleinos.

Theoretically, one could interpret the expression "*en tois oikeios*" (which I have translated as "on his own estate" above) in the masculine, deriving it from "*hoi*

oikeioi” (“his own people, including relatives and members of his family”, possibly also: “slaves and servants”). But the expression can just as well – and indeed probably should – be derived from “*ta oikeia*” (the property, one’s own possession). So it would seem to have been Skylitzes’ intention to show that Maleinos had such a large estate that he could effortlessly entertain the emperor together with his whole army on his land. Of course, it is not to be ruled out that among the certainly numerous domestic staff, that Maleinos must have had at his disposal, there were also many slaves. But any attempt at quantifying, as indicated above, must remain pure speculation for lack of suitable evidence. Since later chroniclers (such as John Zonaras) did not adopt this passage or its entire context, we do not gain any clue from later Byzantine reception for understanding the passage. It is thus hardly surprising that more recent secondary literature is considerably more reserved in its interpretation of the passage from Skylitzes than Ostrogorsky was, dispensing with any concrete, quantifying details about Eustathios Maleinos’ ownership of slaves.⁴²

THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, *VITA BASILII*

Already in the discussion on this passage from Skylitzes it is thus to be seen that we are still far removed from a thorough evaluation of the Byzantines’ historiographic and chronicle sources with regard to specific statements on slaves and slavery in the Byzantine empire. In contrast to the passage just discussed, which contains no concrete clue concerning the number of slaves on the estates of the Anatolian magnate Eustathios Maleinos, the information concerning the wealth of the famous old lady (and probably widow) Danielis/Danelis⁴³ from the Peloponnese, who was a strong supporter of Emperor Basil I (867–86), is considerably more concrete.

The stories of her encounter with Basil during his stay near Patras (before he became emperor) and her later visit to Constantinople are contained in the *Vita Basilii*, the *Life* of Basil I (namely, book V of *Theophanes continuatus*), written by Basil’s grandson Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, and also partly in the chronicle of John Skylitzes. These accounts provide the following exact figures:

- 1 Danielis presented Basil *inter alia* with thirty “slaves for service” (*andrapoda pros hyperesian*) before his return to Constantinople.⁴⁴
- 2 Later invited by order of the emperor Basil to come on a visit to Constantinople, she undertook the long journey transported on a kind of low bed by some 300 strong young men, who were, on her orders, selected from among the *oiketai* (hence surely slaves from her household) and took turns to carry her.⁴⁵
- 3 When she was received in imperial audience at the Magnaura she presented Basil with 500 “houseborn” slaves (*oiketika . . . prosopa*), including 100 good-looking eunuchs.⁴⁶
- 4 Finally, after the death of Basil I the long-lived widow came to the capital again, to visit Basil’s son, Emperor Leo VI (886–912), appointing him heir to all her fortune, after which she returned home and died. Since her vast fortune also included innumerable slaves (*andrapoda*), Leo ordered that 3,000 slaves (*somata*) be released, settling them in the *thema* of Langobardia, in Italy, while the rest of her estate, including further slaves (*psycharia*), was distributed in accordance with her will.⁴⁷

SKYLITZES

Close study of John Skylitzes may show how rewarding it is to examine chronographic and historiographic texts more closely. In one passage Skylitzes relates in detail how a lunatic “houseborn” (*paidiske oikogenes*) predicted to Emperor Michael I Rangabe (811–13) the early loss of his rule, a story which is also to be found in several other sources of that time. It begins: “Emperor Michael had a certain [young?] houseborn slave [or servant] (*paidiske tis oikogenes*).”⁴⁸ In Thurn’s German translation the short sentence reads: “Kaiser Michael hatte in seiner unmittelbaren Umgebung eine junge Dienerin,” while the French translation runs: “Il [= Michael] avait une servante, née dans sa maison.”⁴⁹ Contrary to the French translation, Thurn erroneously translated the term *oikogenes*, which may very well indicate the girl’s birth to a slave mother living in the palace. Hence I am inclined to interpret the expression *paidiske oikogenes* as “a houseborn (girl-)slave.”⁵⁰ With regard to this quotation, it is, by the way, important to compare the entry in the *PmbZ*, which registers the girl among the *Anonyma* as a maidservant (“Dienerin”).⁵¹ This neutral term shows that the *PmbZ* is in principle very cautious in assigning the term slave to a certain person. Rather it prefers not to differentiate between servants and (maid)servants or slaves, a position which is also shown by the catchwords in the index “Titel und Berufe” (Titles and Professions) with their catchwords “Diener (auch Sklave)” = “servant (also slave),” or “Dienerin (auch Sklavin)” = “maidservant (also slave).” Since every prosopographical entry cites all sources serving to denote a person’s position, the *PmbZ* in general leaves the interpretation to the reader.

Another passage in Skylitzes concerns Emperor Theophilos (829–43), who committed adultery when captivated by the beauty of a servant (or slave) in the service of the empress (*therapainidos . . . hyperetouses te basilidi*).⁵² The German translation (perhaps a little too freely) renders the term *therapainis* by “Zofe” (lady-in-waiting), the French one by “servante.”⁵³ The *PmbZ* registers this person under no. 10099 as: “Dienerin – *therapainis*.”⁵⁴ There is no different term from other sources relating this story which might help us to denote the status of the *therapainis* more precisely. Since it remains unclear whether she was a slave or a free servant of the empress, the slave status is by no means to be ruled out *a priori*. In any case, we should bear in mind the variety of terms (e.g. *therapainis*) which had been used since antiquity to denote (free) servants and/or slaves.⁵⁵

Three further passages contain interesting insights into the reign of Emperor Leo VI (the Wise or Philosopher). In one, Skylitzes relates that Mousikos, the eunuch and slave (*doulos*) of the powerful courtier Stylianos Zautzes (the *Basileiopator*), utilized his position in order to gain an advantage for some profit-seeking merchants and traders who were his (Mousikos’) friends. The intention was namely to shift the flow of Bulgarian goods from the capital Constantinople to Thessalonika and put the right to levy high customs duties on the merchandise in the way of the said merchants. With this measure, Mousikos, and thus also his lord and master Stylianos Zautzes, are said to have laid the foundations for the Bulgaro-Byzantine war of 894.⁵⁶ Without doubt, Mousikos, as eunuch and *doulos* of Stylianos Zautzes, was a court slave.⁵⁷ Not only does his being a eunuch – as indicated by the designation *doulos* – point to this fact, but also the fact that his name occurs so rarely in Byzantine sources. Special treatises on slave names in Byzantium, comparable, for

instance, to the works of H. Solin,⁵⁸ do not yet exist and will probably never be produced on any large scale for Byzantium because of the paucity of sources. It is, however, significant that the *PmbZ* does not currently include any other entry for this name. Whether this name is to be interpreted as a reference to the person's musical or poetic skills or is – in an ironic sense – more of a reference to the fact that he completely lacked these talents, may be left open.

Admittedly, it does appear that Skylitzes (or his source used in this section, the so-called *Theophanes continuatus*) has intentionally sought to present the events in an unfavourable light for Zautzes in order to cover up Leo VI's own share in the outbreak of the war. The emphasis on the apparently central role of the slave Mousikos and his companions could thus have been intended to contribute, in Leo's interest, to depriving Zautzes of power and reducing him in status, something that appears quite plausible.⁵⁹ But, whatever the case may have been, it was at all events in keeping with the facts that Mousikos, as slave and eunuch of Zautzes and as his lord's confidant, had no little influence at court, before the emperor – at a time when he did not trust Zautzes either – banished him to the Stoudios monastery.

The fourth passage from Skylitzes concerns the attempt by Samonas to ingratiate himself with Zoe (Karbonopsina), Leo VI's fourth wife.⁶⁰ Samonas was a former Byzantine prisoner-of-war and eunuch of (high) Arab origin, who had risen from being a slave and cup-bearer in the house of Stylianos Zautzes – probably after he had been released – to the post of *koubikoularios* around 900, then to *prot-ospatharios* in 905(?), further to *patrikios* and in 907 to *parakoimomenos*. He was, therefore, the closest confidant of the emperor (until his fall in 908). In order to make Zoe well disposed towards him, he made her a present of his own servant who came from the Paphlagonia region (*hyperetes*), Constantine – a castrate (*ektomias*).⁶¹

This story in Skylitzes also goes back in its core, just like the passage dealt with above (but without the reference to the origin from Paphlagonia), to the history of *Theophanes continuatus* in which Constantine is, however, neutrally designated as “his (man-)servant” (*anthropos autou*) and former slave or servant (*douleusas*) of the *magistros* and *epi tou kanikleiou* Basileios.⁶² On the basis of this text version, Tougher speaks of Constantine as a “eunuch servant,”⁶³ but in my opinion the diverging terminology in Skylitzes' text indicates that the *anthropos* Constantine was most probably also an emancipated slave.⁶⁴ This interpretation would seem to be supported by the fact that it is quite clearly to be seen from both text versions that Samonas presented the empress with “his” Constantine. Samonas could probably have only done that if he was the lord and owner of this man, whom he had received from the former property of the *magistros* Basileios, but now passed on for his part to the empress.⁶⁵ If that was indeed the case, then Constantine, when he was placed in the service of the empress, would also have initially taken up the position of a slave with her. Looking ahead, it may just be noted here that he then rose in a similar manner as Samonas had done before.⁶⁶

A fifth passage from Skylitzes, the third from the reign of Leo VI, consists of a short section of a longer story⁶⁷ concerning the flight of an early representative of the Doukas lineage, Andronikos Doux, to the Arabs in the year 905 or 906. Skylitzes here relates that Andronikos undertook his flight with “his relatives and servants” (*doulois*), hence his slaves and/or servants.⁶⁸ The sense “slaves” for *douloi* here is

widely accepted in secondary works up to now,⁶⁹ but both the German and the French translations do not make this clear.⁷⁰

A sixth passage from Skylitzes supplies important proof of the fact that prisoners-of-war were a main source of slaves in Byzantium. The general Leo Phokas, brother of Nikephoros (later emperor), fought successfully in the eastern regions of the empire, gaining victory in the battle of Adrassos (962) against his Syrian foe. Afterwards he was able to send so many prisoners-of-war to Constantinople that they filled the mansions and rural regions of the capital with slaves (*douloi*).⁷¹ It is generally accepted that the *douloi* mentioned here were slaves.⁷²

The seventh passage from Skylitzes, the last one to be discussed here, is of a quite different character in its content in comparison to the former texts. It relates the following. When Basil II, after his final victory over the Bulgarians in 1018, passed the fortress of Serbia among other places on his march back from Kastoria towards Athens, “he came to Stagoi where also Elimagos, the [Bulgarian] *archon* of Belegrada [today Berat in Albania], met him in a subservient attitude (*meta doulikou tou schematos*), together with his fellow *archontes*.”⁷³

Now, the translation proposed here diverges completely from all the previous translations and interpretations of the passage since that by Gustave Schlumberger, who interpreted the passage to mean that Elimagos and his companions appeared before the emperor “*dans de sordides vêtements d’esclaves*” (thus in dirty slaves’ clothes), meaning in this case “shaven-headed, bare-footed, with a rope around their necks, in shirts.”⁷⁴ However, in my opinion, this interpretation of the passage is untenable, as here *meta . . . schematos* is interpreted misleadingly, namely in concrete, factual terms (as slaves’ clothing), although such an interpretation is improbable already from the context. Here the author is talking as it were of enemy officers who now, at this first encounter, revealed themselves to the emperor by their attitude and appearance (deportment) as people well disposed (and thus no longer hostile) towards him, thus as devoted people. In other words: *doulikon schema* is by no means “slave’s clothing” in concrete terms – these military men will quite certainly have worn their appropriate “uniform” – but rather means “servile” in a figurative sense: a servile habit of mind, or servile disposition. Elimagos and his followers showed themselves at this encounter with Basil II, their new lord, as his servants and subjects.

It is possible to support the interpretation presented here with a very similar passage from the history of Michael Attaleiates, who, in his report of the rebellion by Nikephoros Botaneiates⁷⁵ against the reigning emperor Michael VII (1071–8), mentions a troop of mercenaries who had been entrusted with the protection of the Bithynian city of Nicaea but had joined the usurper. Three days after leaving the city, the mercenary troops then “encountered the latter [Nikephoros Botaneiates], who was just approaching Kotyaion, both with a submissive troop and attitude (*misthophorikon . . . katalipon to epitagma . . . meta doulikou kai syntagmatos kai schematos, apentese touto*). And soon after they immediately proved the devotion they had promised to him, Botaneiates (*ten douleian homologesan*), by appropriate fighting . . .”⁷⁶

This “gallop” through some passages, mainly in Skylitzes, has not led in every case to clear, indubitable findings, but I do hope that the following has become clear. An exact recording and analysis of certain suspicious passages, or even of passages

that one imagines have already clearly been interpreted, drawn from historical works is indispensable in order to begin to measure the scale and nature of slavery in Byzantium. And this is but the first stage.

NOTES

- * I would like to thank John M. Deasy, Mainz, for his painstaking translation of my chapter and Paul Stephenson for his various thoughtful suggestions.
- 1 For example, the general index of Laiou 2002b does not even mention the terms slave and slavery. In general see Verlinden 1977: 978–98 (but note the critical remarks by Rotman 2004: 34–3); *ODB*: 659, 1915–16; Prinzing 1995; Prinzing 2001a; Rautman 2006: 21–3, 50 and 137; Déroche *et al.* 2007: 529–35; and most recently Haldon 2009: 3 and *passim* (see index). For a comprehensive bibliography on ancient slavery, see Bellen and Heinen 2003, I, 275–81 (nos. 4505–85, with further references), which relates to Byzantium. For current bibliographical research see the (often annotated) entries of the current bibliography in *BZ*. See also the very instructive section (III.3.a) on slavery in Hunger 1965: 161–70.
 - 2 Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950 was for a long time the only relatively comprehensive study on slavery in Byzantium, covering the period from Constantine I until 1204. The most recent monograph in this field is Rotman 2004. Though important and fundamental in many respects, it is again not sufficiently comprehensive and exhaustive, since it is chronologically limited (sixth to eleventh centuries) and its focus is on the Mediterranean world as a whole. For the late Byzantine era see especially Köpstein 1966.
 - 3 Cf. Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950, 21–8; Browning 1958: 39–40 (and the hagiographic sources mentioned at pp. 42–3); Rotman 2004: 185–229, 253–9 (*Appendice des sources juridiques*), and below.
 - 4 Cf. Köpstein 1966: 31–55; Verlinden 1977: 990–1; and Rotman 2004: 124–38 (ch. 3.1: *La langue de l'esclavage*) and 247–52 (*Appendice terminologique*).
 - 5 On this topic see Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950: 70–84; Patlagean 1987: 531–42; Rotman 2004: 141–71.
 - 6 Cf. Demandt 2007: 197–8 on the *Codex Theodosianus*, 237–8 on the *Corpus juris civilis*, and 343–51 on slaves in the whole period of late antiquity (with further references). Useful aids for details about the regulations on slaves by the emperors from Zenon to Justinian I (or about the respective novellas of Justinian I) are Lounghis *et al.* 2005: no. 114 *passim*, and van der Wal 1998.
 - 7 Cf. the useful table 5.2 (*Les régulations impériales traitant de l'esclavage*) in Rotman 2004: 253–9, listing laws and novels concerning slaves from 535 to 1095. Cf. in addition Dölger and Müller 2003: nos. 563, 679, 728a, 754 (novels are underlined), Dölger and Wirth: 1995, no. 1476, and Dölger-Wirth: 1977, no. 2054b. Concerning the treatment of slaves in Byzantine criminal law cf. Troianos 1992: *passim*.
 - 8 *ODB*: 265; Dölger and Müller 2003: no. 514a.
 - 9 *ODB*: 671–2; and Burgmann 1983, especially its titles 8 and 17.
 - 10 *ODB*: 1725; Dölger and Müller 2003: no. 549a.
 - 11 Cf. Noailles and Dain 1944; Dölger and Müller 2003: no. 513a (without a detailed list, but cf. Rotman 2004: 257–8, listing novels 9, 10, 11, 29, 33, 36, 37, 38, 40, 49, 59, 60, 66, 67, 100 and 101).
 - 12 Cf. Dölger 1976: nos. 230, 239 and 253; Dölger and Müller 2003: nos. 549, 556, 647.
 - 13 Koder 1991b. Cf. also Dagron 2002: 409, 418–21, 431, 436, 440 (these pages speak of slavery or slaves in connection with the regulations of the *Book of the Eparch*).
 - 14 On canon law generally see *ODB*: 372–4, and especially about slaves in canon law Papagianne 1991.
 - 15 Cf. Koder 1991a; and Rotman 2004: 141–50.
 - 16 *ODB*: 1617; Burgmann 1995; and on slaves in the *Peira*: Köpstein 1993.
 - 17 Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950: 19–21; Klein 2000a: 205–15; Klein 2000b: 380; and Rotman 2004: 185–8 (which ignores Klein's book and article). On Eustathios see Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950: 53–4; Kazhdan 1984b: 142, 149, 164–7; and Kazhdan 1985: 223, but above all Kolovou 2006: 132*–134* (with the text of letter no. 27, the so-called testament of Eustathios, 79–80).
 - 18 Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950: 12–18; Klein 2000a; Klein 2000b.
 - 19 Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950: 115–18; Köpstein 1966: 31–55; Köpstein 1979; Klein 2000b; Rotman

- 2004: 48, 50–1, 97–8, 124–36 and 252 (here modifying the results of Köpstein 1979), but on *sklabos* cf. also the largely ignored article by Korth 1970.
- 20 Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950: 32–8, 42–52; Browning 1958: 43–6; Köpstein 1966: 103–13; Rotman 2004: 141–56; Déroche *et al.* 2007: 532–4. On eunuchs cf. most recently Tougher in this volume, and his comprehensive study, Tougher 2008, which contains also a useful “Select prosopography of late Roman and Byzantine eunuchs” (appendix 2, 133–71) and further bibliography.
- 21 Browning 1958: 46–7; Kaplan 1992: 273–7; *ODB*: 1915; Brandes 2002: 360.
- 22 Browning 1958: 43–7; Kazhdan 1985: 222; *ODB*: 1915; Kaplan 1992: 332–4; Köpstein 1993: 2; Morris 1996: 140–1; Lefort 2002: 241; Rotman 2004: 156–60 (NB read always *horia* instead of *horioi* in table 3.4.1).
- 23 Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950: 86–9; Browning 1958: 48–50; Köpstein 1966: 56–75; Rotman 2004: 55–94. Concerning the thorny, and recently much discussed, problem of the function of the *andrapoda* seals cf. Rotman 2004: 107–8; but now (critical) Brandes 2002: 351–65.
- 24 Browning 1958: 48; Köpstein 1966: 100; Rotman 2004: 54.
- 25 Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950: 89–94; Köpstein 1966: 84–100; Verlinden 1977: 107 and *passim*; Browning 1958: 50–2; Rotman 2004: 94–112.
- 26 Cf. Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950: 90; Browning 1958: 53–4; Köpstein 1993: 18; Morrisson and Cheynet 2002: 847–50 (table 14: price from tenth to fifteenth centuries); Rotman 2004: 259–61 (fifth to eleventh centuries).
- 27 Vryonis 1957: 272 and 277; Lemerle 1979b: 33–4; Kaplan 1992: 334–6, 342–3, 347–9, 367; Köpstein 1993: 24–6; Rotman 2004: 154–5, 170, 175–7, 179, 212, 259–61, here 261 (with endnote 22, where he says that the enormous price can only be explained by an error: “soit du copiste, de l’écrivain ou du testateur,” but does not try to offer a possible solution such as the one given above).
- 28 Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950: 91; Browning 1958: 52; Hunger 1965: 170. Xyngopoulos 1965b, though important for the topography of the slave market in Constantinople, this article is generally disregarded, except by Bouras 2002: 515. Cf. Verlinden 1977: 984; Berger 1988: 316–18; Ferluga 1987: 639; Köpstein 1993: 17; Rotman 2004, 108 (with 299, n. 250), 118–20 and 293.
- 29 Browning 1958: 50; Köpstein 1966: 85–94; Verlinden 1977: 114 and *passim*; Rotman 2004: 120–2. But cf. the restrictive and sceptical remarks by Lilie 1984: 273 about the role slaves may have played as merchandise in the commercial relations of the Italian maritime cities with Byzantium before 1204.
- 30 Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950: 101–13; Morris 1996: 135–9; Rotman 2004: 171–84, 189–91, 202–3, 206.
- 31 Dölger and Wirth 1995: no. 1177 (from 1095); cf. Rotman 2004: 199–201.
- 32 Cf. Browning 1958: 39; and Rotman 2004: 136–8 (*La langue de la littérature historiographique*) and 251 (table 5.1.3 concerning the “*littérature historiographique*”), where he only touches on the problem of how slaves (or slavery) are mentioned in narrative historical sources in general terms.
- 33 Nikephoros 1990: 40–1.
- 34 Kaegi 2003: 61 commenting upon the passage, speaks of “a maidservant of a resident of the city” and calls her a “servant,” too, while Speck 1988: 241 speaks of a “Magd” (maid servant).
- 35 For the following sections, see Prinzing 2001b.
- 36 Ostrogorsky 1963: 254.
- 37 Ostrogorsky 1963: 63, 113, 158, 254, 325.
- 38 Prinzing 2001b: 353.
- 39 Cedrenus 1839: 448, 9–11.
- 40 Skylitzes 1973: 340, 88–9; cf. also the recent French translation by Flusin and Cheynet 2003: 284.
- 41 Hadjinicolaou-Marava 1950: 51; and (though only indirectly) Browning 1958: 46; Prinzing 2001b: 354.
- 42 Cf. Cheynet 1990: 214–15 and 328 (n. 41); Kaplan 1992: 328, 366 and 276. But with regard to the interpretation of the expression “*panstrati*” cf. also the erroneous rendering of the passage quoted above by Patlagean 1987: 568: “When Basil II stopped at the country seat of one of the great magnates of his day, Eustathius Maleinus, the emperor took his sumptuous welcome, with his host’s private army massed nearby [*sic*], as a sign of subversive intentions.”
- 43 Cf. *ODB*: 583; *PmbZ*: no. 1215 (with bibliography); Koutava-Delivoria 2001: 98–100 (who defends the previously disputed credibility of the historical account about Danielis); Cheynet *et al.* 2007: 53
- 44 Theophanes Continuatus 1838: 228, ll. 3–5; cf. also the French translation in Cheynet *et al.* 2007: 55 (“*esclaves domestiques*”).

- 45 Theophanes Continuatus 1838: 317, ll. 17–24; and Skylitzes 1973: 161, ll. 85–9. Cf. the recent French translation in Cheynet *et al.* 2007: 55 (“serviteurs”), adopting the rendering of earlier translations (German: Thurn 1983: 197; French: Flusin and Cheynet 2003: 134). But in my opinion the context requires the term *oiketai* to be translated as slaves.
- 46 Theophanes Continuatus 1838: 318, ll. 5–7; cf. the French translation by Cheynet *et al.* 2007: 55, “esclaves”. Since the expression *oiketika . . . prosopa* is equivalent to the former *oiketai* in paragraph 2, the difference made in the French translation is inconceivable to me.
- 47 Theophanes Continuatus 1838: 320, l. 23, 321, l. 10. Cf. Cheynet *et al.* 2007: 56–7; Dölger and Müller 2003: no. 563; Lefort 2002: 241; Rotman 2004: 182 and 307, n. 100.
- 48 Skylitzes 1973: 11, l. 69–12, l. 91. Cf. Thurn 1983: 37–8; Flusin and Cheynet 2003: 11–12.
- 49 Thurn 1983: 37; Flusin and Cheynet 2003: 11.
- 50 Though the girl or young woman is also denoted by some other terms in the context of the story, these do not allow one definitely to specify her status as a slave or free servant. The same is true for the other sources containing the story cited by the *PmbZ*, for which see the next note.
- 51 *PmbZ*: 10035.
- 52 Skylitzes 1973: 55, l. 77–56, l. 85.
- 53 Thurn 1983: 86–7, here 87; Flusin and Cheynet 2003: 52.
- 54 *PmbZ*: 10099.
- 55 Cf. Kästner 1981. Based on the ancient Greek terms, her article is nevertheless useful for the study of Byzantine texts in classicizing or atticizing Greek.
- 56 Skylitzes 1973: 175, l. 77–176, l. 88. Cf. Thurn 1983: 212–13, and the translation by Flusin and Cheynet 2003: 147–8, with useful commentary.
- 57 Cf. now Tougher 2008: 157.
- 58 Solin 1996 contains six source-entries for the name Musicus.
- 59 Cf. Magdalino 1990.
- 60 Skylitzes 1973: 189, l. 53–190, l. 56. Cf. the translations of Thurn 1983: 226–7; and Flusin and Cheynet 2003: 160.
- 61 On both men see Tougher 2008: 55, 142, 164 and Tougher’s index.
- 62 Theophanes Continuatus 1838: 375, ll. 10–13.
- 63 Tougher 1997b: 200.
- 64 On the sense of *anthropos* (emancipated slave, hence free servant in the group of a lord’s servants, consisting of slaves and (free) servants, cf. Rotman 2004: 153–6, 178–81.
- 65 Cf. Tougher 1997b: 184, n. 75: “Note that the chronicle indicates that Constantine was a piece of property that could be passed from one owner to another.” Tougher here seems to interpret the passage in the sense that Constantine was passed as a slave to the empress.
- 66 But cf. Flusin and Cheynet 2003: 160–1: “Samonas, qui travaillait à s’attirer la bienveillance de l’impératrice, lui donna, pour qu’il la servit, son serviteur Constantin, un eunuque originaire de Paphlagonie.” (Registered in their index as *Constantin, parakoimomène*, it probably would have been better to say: “slave, after his emancipation *parakoimomenos*”).
- 67 Skylitzes 1973: 186, l. 48–188, l. 9.
- 68 Skylitzes 1973: 186, ll. 58–61.
- 69 *ODB*: 657.
- 70 Thurn 1983: 223–5, here: “zog er mit seinen Verwandten und Dienern los.” Flusin and Cheynet 2003: 157–9, here 158 (“avec ses parents et ses serviteurs”).
- 71 Skylitzes 1973: 250, ll. 47–61, here l. 56. Cf. Flusin and Cheynet 2003: 211. Rotman 2004 ignores the passage.
- 72 McCormick 2001: 745; and Lefort 2002: 242.
- 73 Skylitzes 1973: 364, ll. 68–73. Cf. Flusin and Cheynet 2003: 302, who offer a translation which follows the interpretation of Schlumberger (see next footnote).
- 74 Schlumberger 1900: 398. Similar interpretations of the text are to be found in *Vizantijski izvori* 1966: 134–5 (J. Ferluga); Pirivatrić 1997: 178, 182, 196; and (though with a question mark) Božilov 1995: 307, no. 343.
- 75 Cf. Cheynet 1990: 84–5, no. 105.
- 76 Attaleiates 1835: 265. Cf. also the new edition: Attaleiates 2002: 190

CHAPTER NINE

MONOTHEISTS, DUALISTS AND PAGANS



Christopher Livanos

The scholarly literature devoted to paganism and Orthodoxy in the Byzantine empire has understandably focused on the very earliest part of the Byzantine history, when paganism still had significant numbers and prestige.¹ The empire, however, did not cease to have important relations with groups of people, internal as well as external, whom we would today classify as “pagan.” We may note from the outset that no satisfactory equivalent to “pagan” existed in the language of the Byzantines. Any essay purporting to cover the topic of “Orthodoxy and Paganism” in Byzantium ought to discuss not only the pagan holdouts of late antiquity, but polytheistic people such as the pre-Christian Slavs, and Byzantines whose interest in paganism ranged from the syncretism of Michael Psellos to George Gemistos Plethon’s full embrace of a Neoplatonic form of pagan religion. After paganism forever lost the battle for the empire’s soul to Christianity, the pre-Christian past remained an important part of the cultural heritage of educated Byzantines. Officially, a Byzantine was expected to revile the ancient religion while admiring other aspects of ancient culture. The boundary between acceptable and excessive admiration for pagan antiquity was not always clear, and charges of paganism could be leveled against scholars of antiquity by their opponents for reasons of theological disagreement, political rivalry or personal animosity.

Nobody in the medieval or late antique world referred to himself as a “pagan.” Conversely, everyone, whatever his religious beliefs may have been, regarded himself as *orthodoxos*, or “right-believing.” I believe it is important to discuss paganism and Orthodoxy not only in the empire’s early years but throughout its existence, but one of the admitted obstacles is how we are to understand these terms. Kaldellis suggests that Byzantines used “pagan,” literally *hellene*, to mean polytheist;² but I prefer not to use that wording due to the problems that emerge in attempting to sort out which religions are polytheist and which are not. Zoroastrians and neo-Platonists thought of themselves as the purest of monotheists, while Christians were accused by their opponents of idolatry and tritheism. To the Byzantines, a pagan was not so much a polytheist as a worshipper of a false god. Those who differed from the true Orthodox faith were divided into those who worshipped false gods and those who worshipped the correct god in an incorrect manner. In the former group were the *hellenes*, and in

the latter Jews and heretics, though terms such as “pagan” and “heretic” could also be used as generic terms of abuse with little theological precision.

It has been argued that monotheism is an abstraction at which few believers arrive and that popular religion is often polytheistic and always at least dualistic.³ This chapter will not be concerned with the influence of polytheistic religions on the cults of saints and angels. It is sufficient to say that, by late antiquity, paganism had developed a monotheistic belief system at the level of the doctrine taught by elite theologians. One who argues that, in practice, Orthodox and Catholic Christianity have absorbed elements of paganism must also acknowledge that pagan theologians were, in theory, monotheistic or monistic. Plotinus may have had a sounder claim than a Christian, Muslim or Jew to the title of monotheist, since his theology did not include the doctrine of an evil spirit that has always been difficult to reconcile with the avowed monotheism of the Abrahamic faiths. Even religions like Protestant Christianity that do not have multiple gods or quasi-divine intermediaries such as saints and angels nonetheless teach that the one supremely good God is opposed by a supremely evil adversary. We must, then, ask how Christianity differs from Manichaeism, and the answer is not always clear. Christianity in all of its traditional Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant forms resolves the problem of evil by stating that evil has no being in itself but is rather a privation of being.⁴ Such a definition of evil arose in opposition to Manichaeism’s insistence that good and evil are both essences that have always existed in opposition. Properly understood, Orthodox Christianity’s response to the Manichees in no way diminishes the reality of evil. Cold and starvation are two harmful physical phenomena defined by the privation of something else, heat and nourishment, and Christianity transposes the same sort of physical phenomena into the metaphysical realm in formulating its understanding of the nature of evil. For all its nuance, “battle with the forces of the privation of good” does not have the same ring as “battle with the forces of evil,” and Christianity, like most monotheistic religions, maintains a strong streak of dualism at the level of practical piety. Since the Christian idea of evil as *privatio boni* was used mostly as a refutation of dualistic belief systems, we ought to point out that the doctrine does not really contradict a dualistic view of reality. While the Fathers of the Christian Church were refuting dualism with the argument that goodness is existence and evil is non-existence, Zoroastrian theologians were defending dualism with precisely the same argument.⁵ The *privatio boni* argument probably has its origins in Zarathustra’s statement that Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu are, respectively, “life and not-life.”⁶

If true monotheism is rare at the level of piety, true polytheism is equally rare at the level of theology. The “pagan” philosophers of antiquity, from the pre-Socratics down through the neo-Platonists all maintained a belief in a single transcendent god. Zoroastrian theologians likewise have always viewed their religion as a pure form of monotheism. Their belief in heavenly beings is no more polytheistic than the Christian, Jewish or Muslim belief in angels; and their belief in a divine heptad (Ahura Mazda and six divine beings exemplary of the created order) is inspired by a monotheistic impulse as profound as that behind the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Even the famous “Zoroastrian dualism” is not a true bi-theism, as the evil principal is never thought of as a “god” nor viewed as in any way equal to the good creator. When we consider the Orthodox conflict with

Manichees and later dualistic belief systems, we would do well to recall the words of the Iranologist E. W. West:

Neither party seems to have fairly considered how any religion which admits the personality of an evil spirit, in order to account for the existence of evil, can fail to become a dualism to a certain extent. If, therefore, the term is to be used in controversy, it behooves those who use it to define the limits of objectionable dualism with great precision, so as not to include most of the religions of the world, their own among the number. If it be necessary for a dualism that the evil spirit be omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, or eternal, then is the Parsi religion no dualism.⁷

West's remarks on the weakness of Christian polemics against Zoroastrianism apply equally to most of the charges against allegedly bi-theistic and polytheistic belief systems.

The persecutions that took place from the beginning of the Christian era until the conversion of Constantine shaped how all Christians would view paganism. In general, Christians in lands that experienced violent conflicts between Christianity and the pre-Christian religions viewed the achievements of pagan antiquity with ambivalence, while peoples such as the Irish and the Norse, who converted to Christianity with little bloodshed, were frequently positive in their portrayal of their own pagan ancestors. Dante agonized over the fate of just pagans until he was driven to put them in Limbo, previously reserved for unbaptized infants. We may contrast the *Beowulf* poet, who states with no equivocation that the just pagan king Scyld Scefing "crossed over into the Lord's keeping."⁸ Greek Christians of late antiquity had an especially ambiguous attitude toward their pagan past. While the doctrine of Limbo was not an option to consider for an eleventh-century Byzantine poet, John Mauropous clearly felt concerns similar to Dante's when he composed a prayer for God to save the souls of Plato and Plutarch.⁹

Byzantinists and neo-Hellenists are familiar with the argument that the term "Hellene" was synonymous with "pagan." A more convincing argument is that "Hellene" meant not so much "pagan" as "ancient."¹⁰ A Byzantine would have been confused under most circumstances had he heard a non-Greek polytheist referred to as a "Hellene." "Ancient" may be a more fitting rendering of the term "Hellene," because "ancient" may mean either venerable or backward, or both, depending on the context; and similar connotations are found in Byzantine use of "Hellene." Greek Christians commonly referred to themselves as Hellenes, which is why "pagan" is not a fully satisfactory translation. "Ancient" may seem an even worse translation because, in Byzantine Greek, it is common to call oneself and one's contemporaries "Hellenes," but when *hellēn* is chosen rather than *christianos*, *Romaïos* or another alternative, the speaker is often invoking pride in the antiquity of his people. This is especially true in works from the twelfth century onwards.¹¹

Study of pagan classics was a fundamental part of Byzantine education, and the danger that pagan religion might be absorbed through osmosis as one mastered the language of the Hellenes was a dilemma first addressed seriously by Church Fathers of the fourth century. Prior to that, the threat of persecution made Christians uninterested in how to appreciate Homer's language without accidentally

worshipping his gods. Recent studies, including those of Kaldellis and Roilos, have contributed significantly to the already considerable body of scholarship on pagan influence on Byzantine intellectual life.¹² Another important way in which paganism influenced Byzantine society was in the absorption of pagan gods into the ranks of demons of the Orthodox Church. If elites had to grant the pagans at least a grudging respect for their contributions to the empire's high culture, demonology was important to all ranks of Byzantine society and it contributed to an overwhelmingly negative perception of the pagan past. The most astute study of the topic that has been done to date is Cyril Mango's *Diabolus byzantinus*, which argues, "The system of demonology adopted by the Church was specifically a response to the situation of the second and fourth centuries, and its chief plank was the identification of paganism, its cults and oracles, and, of course, its persecution of Christians with the demonic."¹³

After the rise of Christianity and the eclipse of the old polytheistic religion, the Christian empire inherited pagan Rome's rivalry with Persia. The complex history of relations between Zoroastrian Persia and Greek civilization from the time of the first Greco-Persian wars until the Muslim conquest of Persia deserves more attention than it has received. Discussion of Zoroastrianism in this chapter will be confined to how Zoroastrianism was characterized, quite wrongly, as a form of paganism in times of conflict between the Byzantine and Persian empires.

Edward Said has dated the beginning of a western animosity toward "the East" back to Aeschylus' *Persians*, and found traces of an anti-eastern sentiment as early as Homer's *Iliad*.¹⁴ Had Said traced Orientalism not to Aeschylus or Homer but to George of Pisidia, his argument would be more convincing. George's poem *On the Coming of the Barbarians* is arguably the most xenophobic piece of literature surviving in the Greek language. Bulgars, Turks, Scythians and Persians are among the barbarians portrayed as threatening the world of the Romans. No attempt is made to humanize the "Other," such as we find in the works of Herodotus, Aeschylus and especially Homer. "By race and custom the barbarian does not control the reigns of his mind,"¹⁵ is typical, exemplifying the depth of character we find in George's martial poems. The poet's choice of terminology merits discussion, as *barbaros* is clearly a more pejorative term than *hellēn*, which through a remarkable reversal in meaning was another possible word George could have chosen. It was unusual until the eleventh century for Byzantines to refer to themselves as Hellenes. Anthony Kaldellis has noted that the word *hellēn* was applied by Byzantines to groups of people as disparate as Zoroastrians and Chinese as well as the pagan peoples of Russia, Arabia and North Africa. Kaldellis argues that the implication of calling all these people Hellenes was that they were all polytheists. It is not my intention here to quibble over the terminology of Kaldellis' excellent study, but it would probably be more accurate to say "worshipper of a false god" rather than "polytheist." We may also note that the term still had positive connotations in many cases, and that a word such as *eidōlōlatrēs* could be used when the author wished to be more unambiguously harsh in his connotations. If we look to the example of Evagrius Scholasticus' odd reference to Zoroastrians as "Hellenes," the context can perhaps elucidate Evagrius' avoidance of "fire-worshipper," "barbarian" and other overtly negative terms in this particular instance. The Persian king Chosroes declares his love for a Christian woman, lamenting that he cannot marry her because he is a "Hellene."

Chosroes then gives an expensively decorated cross to the Christian community and says a prayer to St Sergius, all making the point that even pagans can be instruments to proclaim the glory of God.¹⁶ This example suggests that “Hellene” was a nuanced word with a wide range of meanings and connotations even in sixth-century Byzantine prose.

It is not surprising that George echoes the charge that Zoroastrians are “fire-worshippers,”¹⁷ but we may still marvel at how he appropriates scriptural imagery to vilify Zoroastrianism, which is, in fact, the one non-Jewish religion whose adherents are praised in both the Old and New Testaments.¹⁸ George’s mention of Lucifer in reference to the Persians is strikingly ironic considering that the term *Heosphoros* comes from a passage in which Isaiah chides the Babylonian “Lucifer” who has fallen to the Persian “Messiah.”¹⁹ “Magi” is a term of abuse in George’s work, despite the central role played in the Gospel of Matthew by the gift-bearing magi, members of the Zoroastrian priestly class. George’s contemporary, the prophet Muhammad, seems to have shared with George the view that the Greeks under Herakleios were champions of monotheism against the Persians. Sura 30 of the Qur’an begins:

- (2) The Greeks have been vanquished
- (3) in the nearer part of the land; and, after their vanquishing, they shall be the victors
- (4) in a few years. To God belongs the Command before and after, and on that day the believers shall rejoice
- (5) in God’s help; God helps whomsoever He will; and He is the All-mighty, the All-compassionate.
- (6) The promise of God! God fails not His promise, but most men do not know it.²⁰

It is clear that these verses express the belief that Greek Christianity is closer than Persian Zoroastrianism to the true religion of Muhammad and his followers. The status of Zoroastrians under Islam has often been ambiguous. At times they have been viewed as heathens, and at other times as People of the Book. Zoroastrians, naturally, rejected the charges of being fire-worshippers and idolaters, and they defended their dualistic beliefs as a more logical form of monotheism against the claims of Christianity and, later, Islam.²¹

Each side in the Byzantine-Persian wars could claim to be the defender of the pure, original monotheism and the avenger of centuries-old injustices. The story of the heroic stand of tiny Greek city-states against the hordes of imperial Persia can still attract western moviegoers, and the Greco-Persian wars provided culturally defining episodes to the Persians as well as to the Greeks. Alexander of Macedon’s sack of Persepolis and alleged burning of its library earned him in Zoroastrian tradition the title “the accursed,” which is shared only by Ahriman, the evil principal which the Abrahamic faiths borrowed from their Persian neighbors as the devil.²² Zoroastrianism was no longer an existential threat to the Byzantines after the Muslim conquest of Persia, but Zoroastrian dualism certainly influenced the prophet Mani, whose threat to Orthodoxy was so great that his name was attached to all dualistic heresies, however tenuous their connection with Mani. Zarathustra (Zoroaster in

Greek) remained a figure of great appeal to spiritual seekers not content to stay within the confines of the Orthodox Church, although his name came to be associated in Byzantium with esoteric writing such as the *Chaldaean Oracles* that had little in common with Zoroastrian teachings found in the Zend Avesta and even less with the *Gathas* composed by Zarathustra himself. Byzantines such as Evagrios Scholastikos and George of Pisidia viewed Zoroastrianism with hostility as a form of paganism. Wrong as their characterization of the Persian religion was, it has some curious similarities with the doctrine developed much later by George Gemistos Plethon, who viewed Zoroaster as a great prophet and a major influence in his attempt to reconstruct the ancient (i.e. Hellenic) religion.

At the same time that Zoroastrianism survived as the Persian state religion, a dualist religion of some sort was practiced among the pre-Christian Slavs. It is unclear what the Slavs' beliefs had in common with Persian dualism.²³ Direct or indirect Zoroastrian influence is not implausible, nor is it out of the question that the cosmic dualism found among the Iranians and the Slavs has a common Indo-European source. Without speculating on the origins of Bogomilism, we certainly must note that the sect's dualistic teachings must have appealed to tendencies that continued to exist within Slavic cultures after their nominal conversion to Orthodox Christianity.²⁴ Mango has reprimanded the author of the *De operatione daemonum*, traditionally Michael Psellos, for engaging at the height of the Bogomil crisis in the seemingly trivial task of articulating a syncretic demonology that works the hordes of the Orthodox hell into a neo-Platonist framework. Without commenting on whether or not the text succeeds in synthesizing the disparate systems of neo-Platonic monism and popular demonology, we may look precisely to the theological crisis prompted by the Bogomils to explain why the author, whom I shall call Psellos, felt that theologians needed to reexamine the Orthodox response to the problem of evil. No theologian has successfully reconciled the reality of evil and suffering with the existence of an omnipotent and good being, and the doctrine of the Bogomils and other dualistic sects offered a complete, non-evasive answer: God is not omnipotent but is countered by an evil force. Mango writes, "The death of the old paganism left, in any case, a gap in the demonic realm that might have been filled by new entrants, such as the pagan Slavs now settled on imperial territory, Muslim and various heretics, in particular Paulicians and Bogomils, who reinterpreted the Biblical data on the Devil in a manner that did not lack all semblance of credibility."²⁵ The dualistic doctrine of the Bogomils is, in truth, not only credible but quite a bit more straightforward than the Orthodox doctrine in which God has complete power but delays using it. We may agree or not with Mango's opinion of the *De operatione daemonum*, but we must recognize, as Mango rightly points out, that it is "the only piece of original Byzantine speculation" on the topic of demonology.²⁶ This piece of information shows that the author turned to Plato in a time of religious crisis, perhaps in the hope that Platonic thought could lead to a more profound understanding of Christian doctrine, or perhaps, if those who doubt Psellos' orthodoxy are correct, simply to reach a personal understanding of the problem of evil amid the conflicting claims of the Orthodox and Bogomil parties.

The *Chaldaean Oracles* attracted intense interest from Michael Psellos, who ingratiated himself enough to the empire's rulers that he did not have to defend seriously the orthodoxy of his beliefs. A serious account of Zoroastrianism does not

seem ever to have been undertaken in Byzantium, but Zoroaster was a figure of interest as a sage of antiquity and, later, as the author to whom the *Chaldaean Oracles* were attributed. It cannot be said for certain that any Byzantine before George Gemistos Plethon in the late Palaiologan period regarded the *Chaldaean Oracles* as sacred scripture, but Michael Psellos seems to have viewed them as the work of a righteous early monotheist. There is no question that Psellos held the *Chaldaean Oracles* in great esteem, but it is difficult to ascertain how much he accepted their teachings as philosophical or theological truth. Psellos is a pivotal figure in the history of Byzantium's views on pagan culture. He explores the affinities that Christianity has with ancient Greek learning, and most significantly he lists the Hellenes as one of five ancient peoples with significant intellectual traditions, the others being Chaldaeans, Egyptians, Jews and finally Christians themselves, "our own people" in Psellos' words. After Psellos' clear distinction between the beliefs of the Greeks and those of other "pagan" peoples, it becomes increasingly rare in Byzantine letters to find the term "Hellene" used indiscriminately of all alleged polytheists. Conversely, it also becomes difficult to identify an equivalent of "pagan" in the usage of the twelfth century onward. When we consider the harsh penalty dealt to Michael Psellos' student John Italos in part for excessive devotion to the pagan Artistotle,²⁷ Psellos' own avowed admiration for the pagan oracles is especially remarkable. Comparison of the fates of the two men also indicates the political astuteness of Psellos. In the twelfth century, the most important Byzantine to take an interest in the *Chaldaean Oracles* was the philosopher and rhetor Michael Italikos. In contrast to Psellos' admiration for the spiritual content of the oracles, Italikos' approach to their study is purely scholarly.²⁸ His commentary has occasional contemptuous remarks on the absurdity of the belief system put forward in the oracles, in a tone not unlike that of a modern Byzantinist with low regard for Byzantine culture.

The Greeks were confronted with their own pre-Christian heritage in the wake of the Crusades when Latin Christendom introduced to Byzantium the tradition of scholastic philosophy and its profound debt to Aristotle. By the fourteenth century, it was normal in religious debate to use Aristotelian syllogistic reasoning, even when the authors did not profess any respect for western scholasticism or any special admiration for Aristotle himself. One important fourteenth-century writer who rejected syllogistic reasoning as a means of arriving at theological truth was Nicephoros Gregoras. Katerina Ierodiakonou and Lowell Clucas have studied the anti-rational movement in fourteenth-century Byzantium.²⁹ Gregoras is a figure who deserves further attention as a figure who pointed out the flaws in Aristotelian logic. Whether or not the modern reader agrees with Gregoras' assertion that logic is an inferior pursuit because it can never be a substitute for divine grace, Gregoras warrants our attention for pointing out that Aristotelian syllogistic reasoning is flawed to the point of being useless as a method of scientific inquiry. Aristotle is currently referred to as the father of modern logic, although the Aristotelian syllogism is really of no use to modern logicians, who owe much more to Euclid than to the Stagirite. At present, logicians and classicists tend to take each other's word regarding Aristotle's importance, but Aristotelian logic is flawed in that it allows one to work with only one variable. In contrast to Aristotelian syllogistic reasoning, Euclidean axiomatic reasoning allows for multiple variables. While caricatures such

as “All men are human; Socrates is human; therefore all men are Socrates” are notoriously unfair to Aristotle, it is unfortunately true that Aristotle’s method, given the first two clauses, will still not allow one to make a conclusion of any consequence about anyone or anything other than Socrates.

The very final years of the Byzantine empire witnessed a genuine but small resurgence of paganism in the circle of philosopher George Gemistos Plethon of Mistra. The Peloponnese during the late Palaiologan period was also the site of a renewed interest in classical themes in visual art, so Plethon’s turn to paganism did not take place in a cultural vacuum.³⁰ It is not clear from his surviving work when Plethon abandoned the Christian faith and became a pagan, but it seems likely that his conversion coincided roughly with the Council of Florence in 1438–9, which Plethon attended. Perhaps the failed attempt at union left him disillusioned with Christianity and in search of another belief system to guide the Greek people.

Plethon attempted to reconstruct the ancient religion of the Hellenes and incorporate into it the best features of other ancient belief systems, especially those of Persia. In addition to the philosophy of Plato, one of his major influences is the book of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which he believed were written by Zoroaster.³¹ Kristeller has argued that what survives of the Plethon’s philosophy is a hatchet job, made to seem particularly offensive by the editing of Plethon’s rival George Scholarios.³² Kristeller’s reading of Plethon is probably colored, however, by his expertise in western Renaissance philosophy. Renaissance humanists in the West commonly used deeply pagan imagery, although in most cases it would be wrong to question the sincerity of their Christian beliefs. There was likewise a tradition of allegorical, Christianizing reading of seemingly secular, even pagan, literature in Byzantium, so Kristeller is not without basis. The case that Plethon was indeed a pagan who sought a revival of the ancient religion was put forward convincingly by C. M. Woodhouse.³³

One of the most important studies of Plethon undertaken in the two decades since the publication of Woodhouse’s book is Polymnia Athanassiadi’s examination of Plethon’s use of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which he attributed to Zoroaster.³⁴ Woodhouse concentrated on Plethon’s antiquarianism. Athanassiadi builds upon the work that has been done on Plethon’s debt to antiquity, the focus of her article is Plethon’s formulation of “a new spiritual way.”³⁵

Although Plethon’s paganism, as Woodhouse demonstrates, was not allegorical, he was an important influence on the tradition of Christian humanist Platonism that flourished in Renaissance Italy, particularly in Florence. The “Plato versus Aristotle” controversy that bitterly divided Renaissance humanists began in late Byzantium with the divide between followers of Plethon and Scholarios. George of Trebizond, a member of the Aristotelian camp, went so far as to declare Plato and Plethon two of the three most wicked men who ever lived, joining ranks with none other than Muhammad.³⁶

In part what led Kristeller to suspect that Scholarios creatively edited Plethon to make the philosopher of Mistra’s views seem less crude and more allegorical was probably a subtle monotheism underlying the complex belief system that Plethon devised. It is not, as I have attempted to show in this chapter, accurate to equate “pagan” and “polytheist.” However one may choose to define “pagan,” it must surely include Plotinus, whose philosophy was more monist than polytheist in any practical sense. What offended Scholarios so deeply was that Plethon rejected Jesus

Christ. Compared to that, the number of gods Plethon substituted in his place was probably less important in the patriarch's eyes.

True polytheism had since pre-Christian times been exceedingly rare or non-existent in complex learned theology of the sort that interested Plethon. It has been stated that Scholarios distorted Plethon's views in order to enhance the polytheistic aspects of Plethon's beliefs and obscure an allegorical and more orthodox meaning. There is no reason to suppose that Scholarios misunderstood Plethon's monotheism or that he deliberately hid it. What would have mattered to Scholarios in formulating the opinion that Plethon had lapsed into hellenism was not the question of whether or not he believed ultimately in one god or many but the fact that Plethon's god was the One of Porphyry and Plotinus rather than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

One point in common between Scholarios and Plethon is that both men turned to late antiquity in their search for religious inspiration to guide the Greek people.³⁷ The two men lived at a time when Greeks and Latins alike were becoming increasingly drawn to the study of the first 500 years of the Christian era. We can look to Byzantium in the mid-fifteenth century to find important influences on several Renaissance humanist traditions, including Protestantism. In one of his letters to a churchman named Joseph, Scholarios wrote that the situation of the Greeks after the Turkish conquest had some similarities to that of the early Church before Constantine. He urged a relaxation of canonical rigor, arguing that the canons did not exist before the Church won the empire and did not need to be enforced in quite the same way now that the Christian empire was no more. Though Plethon did not live to see the conquest of Constantinople, having died in 1450, it was clear to him (as it was to everyone) that the empire was in danger. Like Scholarios, he looked to the time before Constantine for guidance, though he turned to paganism rather than to primitive Christianity.

Scholarios' religious beliefs were entirely Orthodox, and there is in his work no sense of the reformist zeal that would shake the foundations of western Europe some forty-five years after his death, but it is still significant to the ecclesiastical historian that Scholarios drew a clear distinction between pre- and post-Constantinian Christianity and recognized that church practice was dynamic, evolving and able to change to meet the needs of a changing world. For purposes of this chapter, he is perhaps the villain who prevents us from seeing the pagan ideas of Plethon in their fullest form, yet, for someone whose motivation was supposedly to censor the apostate and preserve only enough to tell us how horribly Plethon had allowed the devil to delude him, he preserved a tremendous amount of Plethon's *Book of Laws*.

One of the most significant contributions of scholarship on Plethon over the past ten years has been to show the diversity of his philosophical influences and his apparent desire to establish a syncretistic, universal religion. Woodhouse was concerned with Plethon's intellectual debt to Greek antiquity. The debt cannot be overstated, but Athanassiadi is right to emphasize what she calls Plethon's "cosmopolitanism."³⁸ Stausberg discusses the significance of Zarathustra in Plethon's religious writings in great depth, and Athanassiadi traces possible patterns of influence from the Iranian scholar Sohrawardi through the Jewish esoteric teacher Elissaeus to Plethon. If late Byzantine paganism was a very minor religion in terms of the number of adherents, it was nonetheless vibrant and internationally focused, and the influence it had on the Italian Renaissance through Florentine Platonism and the

works of humanist scholars such as Marsilio Ficino marks it as a spiritual and intellectual tradition worthy of our attention and respect.³⁹

NOTES

- 1 A fine study of the attempt in very early Byzantine society to blend pagan learning and Christian piety is found in Ruether 1969. More recently, the topic of pagan influence on Byzantine culture was studied by eleven contributors to the volume edited by Ierodiakonou 2002b. Kaldellis 2007 is a comprehensive study, emphasizing a reemergence of “hellenic” influence beginning in the eleventh century and reaching an apex in the twelfth. Kaldellis ends his study with the recapture of Constantinople by Michael VIII Palaiologos in 1261, and acknowledges the need for further investigation of Hellenism under the Palaiologans. The most comprehensive work to date on the subject, although it is confined to one figure, is Woodhouse 1986. The essays by Athanassiadi and Ierodiakonou in Ierodiakonou 2002b contribute much to our understanding of later Byzantine Hellenism. The present essay will not attempt a discussion of the much-studied topic of Hellenism in late antiquity. The reader is referred to Fox 1988, Lee 2000 and Ruether 1969.
- 2 Kaldellis 2007.
- 3 The fifth chapter of Stewart 1991: 137–61, examines the dualistic tendencies that exist within Orthodoxy at the non-doctrinal level. The topic is also discussed with reference to western Christianity in Marius 1999: 50–1.
- 4 Athanasios *De incarnatione* 1, Gregory of Nyssa *Great Catechism* 7, Augustine *De natura boni contra Manichaeos*.
- 5 Shaked 1994: 22–3.
- 6 Quoted in Boyce 1984: 35.
- 7 Quoted in Boyce 1984: 134.
- 8 Heaney 2000: verse 27.
- 9 Lagarde and Bollig 1882: 24, epigram 43.
- 10 Duffy 2002: 139.
- 11 See now Beaton 2007.
- 12 Kaldellis 2007; Roilos 2005.
- 13 Mango 1992: 217.
- 14 Said 1979: 20–1.
- 15 Tartaglia 1998: 112. *On Emperor Herakleios and the Persian Wars*: 3, 17–18.
- 16 Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.21–2.
- 17 Tartaglia 1998: 74; *On Emperor Herakleios and the Persian Wars*: 32.
- 18 Isaiah 45:1. Iranologists debate whether or not Cyrus the Great was a practicing Zoroastrian, but he was clearly a worshipper of Ahura Mazda who held Zoroastrianism in high regard (Boyce 2001: 50–4).
- 19 Isaiah 14:12; Matthew 2:1–12. For George’s use of *Heosphoros*, see *Herakleias* 1.53, at Tartaglia 1998: 196. Ostensibly, the reference is to the planet Mercury and not to the fallen angel, but the double meaning of the Persian monarch looking to Lucifer for guidance is unlikely to have escaped the poet’s notice.
- 20 The translation quoted is that of Arberry 1955: 105. For Zoroastrianism under Muslim rule, see Boyce 2001: 145–95.
- 21 The best-known defense of classical Zoroastrian dualism is that of the ninth-century theologian Mardanfarrokht, *The Doubt-Dispelling Exposition*, discussed and quoted in English translation in Boyce 1984: 101–4.
- 22 Boyce 2001: 78.
- 23 Stoyanov 2000: 132–6 discusses Slavic dualistic cosmogonies in comparative Indo-European and Central Asian contexts.
- 24 Similarities between accounts of Slavic creation stories and Bogomil belief are discussed in Obolensky 1971: 287–8.
- 25 Mango 1992: 222.
- 26 Mango 1992: 222.
- 27 For a recent discussion of Italos’ career see Kaldellis 2007: 228–30.

- 28 For comparison of Psellos' and Italikos' approaches to the *Chaldaean Oracles*, see Duffy 1995.
- 29 Ierodiakonou 2002b and Clucas 1985. I owe a debt of gratitude to Jeffrey Kegler for his valuable insight on the importance of Euclid to the development of modern logic and irrelevance of Aristotelian syllogistic reason to scientific problem solving.
- 30 Mouriki 1983.
- 31 For the importance of Zoroaster to Plethon, see Stausberg 1998: 35–92.
- 32 Kristeller 1979: 156.
- 33 Woodhouse 1986.
- 34 Athanassiadi 2002.
- 35 Athanassiadi 2002: 251.
- 36 Quoted in Woodhouse 1986: 367–8.
- 37 Livanos 2006: 89–94.
- 38 Athanassiadi 2002: 251.
- 39 For Plethon's influence on Italian Humanism, see Woodhouse 1986: 357–79.

CHAPTER TEN

THE VIRTUES AND FAULTS OF THE LATIN CHRISTIANS



Tia Kolbaba

The story of how Byzantine Christians related to western European Christians in the Middle Ages is never as straightforward as one would like. There was never a single Byzantine attitude toward westerners, nor did Byzantines see westerners as a mass; they had no idea of “the West” in our modern colonial or post-colonial terms. Bulgars might be a single *ethnos*, but western Europe was home to many *ethne*, and the Byzantines knew that. Moreover, Byzantine attitudes toward westerners changed throughout history, and the change was not merely a descent from friendly condescension to hate-filled fear and loathing. Detailed analysis of Byzantium and its western neighbors yields only the most useless of generalizations: different Byzantine people saw different westerners differently at different times, emphasizing sometimes their ethnic other-ness, sometimes their Christian brotherhood and adherence to the councils, and sometimes their religious “errors.” Only rather late in Byzantine history did some people develop something like a notion of “the West” as a tyrannical enemy. Finally, while in some groups friendly condescension gave way to fear and loathing, in others admiration and even emulation of western ways were common. Diplomats and merchants, emperors and courtiers, princesses and silk-weavers, rulers and ruled, went about their business – even their marriage alliances – conscious of ethnic differences without being ruled by them. This chapter will attempt merely to give an outline of the most crucial period for the separation of the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, the later period generally, but with emphasis on the twelfth century.

As did all sorts of other factors, religious differences and perception of religious differences changed over time. The early (c. 600–843) and middle (843–c. 1050) Byzantine periods are less crucial than the Komnenian (1081–1204) and Palaiologan (1204–1453), for it is the last two periods that see the final estrangement of the Churches of Rome and Constantinople, which is inextricably connected to a series of other changes: the Norman conquest of southern Italy, the papal reform movement, changing methods and emphases in Latin theology, an ever-increasing number of Latins in the empire, the Fourth Crusade and its sack of Constantinople, and persistent imperial attempts to reunite the Churches between 1204 and 1453. Nevertheless, three aspects of Byzantine interaction with the western Churches in the early and

middle periods deserve discussion here because they lay the foundations for later phenomena. First, Byzantine respect for the popes in Rome was still high throughout the middle Byzantine period. Second, large parts of central and southern Italy were returned to Byzantine control in the ninth and tenth centuries. Third, Byzantine and western missionaries clashed in Moravia and Bulgaria with results that would resonate in later centuries.

The premier spiritual power in the West had emerged from the early Middle Ages with its reputation and prestige intact. During the struggles over icons, the papacy had defended the supporters of icons and welcomed them as refugees in Rome. As a result, the late eighth and early ninth centuries were periods of significant Greek presence and influence in the papal city.¹ After the end of iconoclasm, the memory of papal support was incarnate in the monks who had sought shelter in Rome and then returned to Constantinople.² To cite just one prominent example, Methodios I, who became the first patriarch of Constantinople after the Restoration of Orthodoxy in 843, had taken shelter in Rome after iconoclasm was revived in 815, and then returned to Constantinople in 821.³ The prestige accumulated by the early medieval papacy remained evident throughout the ninth and tenth centuries, as Constantinopolitan patriarchs and other Byzantine churchmen continued to acknowledge the pope's orthodoxy and preeminent role in the universal church. While the patriarchs contested any Roman intervention in matters they considered to be in their own jurisdiction, they also expressed their admiration for St Peter and their continued commitment to ecumenical canons and imperial laws which made Rome the first of the patriarchates.⁴

In the ninth to eleventh centuries southern Italy was home to a uniquely mixed ecclesiastical and monastic culture that would provide, in later centuries, some of the strongest resisters to a separation of the Greek and Latin Churches. In southern Italy the leaders of churches and monasteries of the Greek rite might be attracted to both Rome and Constantinople and seem to have had little problem with their dual loyalties.⁵ Neilos of Rossano, a leader of Greek monasticism in southern Italy, founded the monastery of Grottaferrata and set it under papal authority, while the author of his *Life* also emphasizes the ways in which Neilos was oriented toward Constantinople and the ritual differences between Greeks and Latins. The Greek churches and monasteries of Italy would continue, throughout the history of Byzantium, to provide Greek leaders who worked to keep the Latin and Greek Churches together. Although both Byzantines and Latins would continually question the loyalties of these men who were, quite literally, caught in the middle, they were often influential.

Finally, there was one striking and infamous instance of conflict between Greek and Latin Christians in the middle Byzantine period. In the second half of the ninth century Frankish and Byzantine missionaries in Bulgaria competed for the allegiance of Bulgarian Christians – the Franks seeking to establish western customs, rites and doctrine, while various Byzantine missionaries sought to establish eastern ones. In the course of that competition, the Byzantine missionaries became aware of a number of problems, as they saw it, in the Frankish Church. Photios, patriarch of Constantinople (858–67, 877–86) reported a number of Frankish transgressions, the most important of which was their addition of a phrase to the creed: they were teaching the Bulgarians to recite “that the Holy Spirit proceeds not from the Father alone, but also from the Son.”⁶ Nevertheless, this conflict should not be

overemphasized. It ended quickly, never involved the whole western Church and had little later impact. At no time during the conflict did the Byzantine critics attack the pope or imply that the entire western Church had fallen into error. In fact, the addition to the creed – the Filioque – was a Frankish custom that had not yet been accepted in Rome. Photios, who wrote at great length about the horrors of this addition, had sent his profession of faith to Pope Nicholas I (858–67), who had raised no objection to the absence of the Filioque.⁷ Given that the conflict was short-lived and, from the Byzantine perspective, regional, it is not surprising to find few echoes in the following centuries.⁸

In the eleventh century, however, as contact between Greeks and Latins grew, so did awareness of one another's rituals and communication about the differences. In the Greek Church a spectrum of opinion about the Latin Church and its practices developed. On one end of the spectrum were those who believed that the Latins were at best schismatic – that is, violating disciplinary canons of the Church and not responding to admonition from other bishops about this – and at worst heretical. On the other hand, many Greek Christians, from southern Italy to Constantinople to Antioch, ridiculed such anti-Latin fervor and insisted that the Latins were Christian brothers, albeit brothers with some strange customs. The spectrum becomes clear if we begin with the anti-Latin polemicists involved in the “azyme” controversy and move on both to those writers who explicitly disagreed with these polemicists and to Greeks who displayed in various ways that they were in communion with Rome.

The Latin Church uses unleavened bread (*azyma*) in the Eucharist. Most of the eastern Churches, including the Greek Church, use leavened bread (*enzyme*).⁹ This might have remained a matter of indifference for all if the Greek Church of the early eleventh century had not been deeply concerned with non-Chalcedonian Armenians, who also used unleavened bread. The Greeks condemned this usage as a symbol both of the Armenian belief that Jesus Christ had only one nature and of the Armenian attachment to “Judaic” rites.¹⁰ We cannot know who first extended the quarrel about azymes to western Christians, but it is clear that the earliest polemic against the Latin use of unleavened bread is directly dependent upon earlier polemic against the Armenians.¹¹

By around 1050 the growing presence of western merchants in Constantinople was having an impact on this debate. A substantial Latin Church with a monastic community of Benedictines attached was founded to serve the small community of Amalfitan merchants there. The earliest stages of the azyme controversy seem to revolve around this community.¹² From other sources, too, we know that Byzantines and Latins in the capital had been arguing about unleavened bread for some time. Other factors tended to exacerbate this conflict. The Norman conquest of southern Italy had further muddled the already incomprehensible ecclesiastical hierarchy of the region, and after 1059 when the Normans allowed reformer popes into the lands to systematize and rationalize the hierarchy Greek bishops were caught in the middle. Even before 1059, however, bishops could have a confusing set of loyalties. John, bishop of Trani, was a Latin by language and rite, living in a region of Latin population, but nevertheless a supporter of Byzantine sovereignty and an opponent of the Normans. His loyalty to Byzantium earned him an honorary post in the Great Church of Constantinople.¹³ His loyalty to the Latin rite earned him the ire of a Greek churchman who thought such a servant of the patriarch in Constantinople

should not be celebrating the Eucharist with unleavened bread. In the summer of 1053, Leo, archbishop of Ohrid (1037–56), wrote to John.¹⁴ After a long explanation of why the use of azymes in particular was a “Judaizing” practice, Leo exhorted John first to correct his own behavior, then to make many copies of the letter and send them to the pope and the other bishops in Italy.¹⁵ The first Latin to respond to Leo of Ohrid’s attack on the Latin Eucharist was Humbert of Silva Candida, one of Leo’s closest counselors. Humbert visited Trani shortly after the papal army’s defeat at Civitate, so John probably passed Leo of Ohrid’s letter on to him then.¹⁶ Angered by Leo’s criticism, which he saw as an attack on the Holy See, Humbert responded in the autumn of 1053. He wrote two texts: a letter to Patriarch Michael Keroularios in Leo IX’s name, which stressed papal primacy, and his *Dialogues* in defense of unleavened bread.¹⁷ No longer a matter only for popes, emperors and patriarch, differences in ritual or doctrine could now be observed and discussed by Latins in Byzantine service, by Byzantines in Bulgaria and by Latins who traveled to the East.

Meanwhile, the struggle against the Normans in Italy had led to the formation of a papal delegation that was to travel to Constantinople to discuss an alliance between the pope and the Byzantine emperor. There was nothing new in this. Pope Leo IX and the Byzantine representative in Italy had united their forces against the Normans in the spring of 1053, only to be resoundingly defeated in June of that year. The emperor and the patriarch had also recently written to the pope, declaring their desire for Christian unity and their interest in an alliance against the Normans.¹⁸ From a politico-diplomatic point of view, this alliance of the pope and the Byzantine emperor should have been relatively straightforward. For church history, though, the negotiations of 1053–4 were anything but straightforward in their impact. The azyme controversy was about to become crucial in relations between the papacy and the empire.

In the spring of 1054, Humbert of Silva Candida wrote in Leo IX’s name to Emperor Konstantinos IX Monomachos and Patriarch Michael Keroularios.¹⁹ These letters were carried to Constantinople by a papal legation led by Humbert himself.²⁰ Humbert, arrogant as only the reformer convinced of the righteousness of his cause can be, was incensed at the very existence of Greek criticism of Latin practices, for Rome was the Mother Church and the bastion of orthodoxy, Constantinople the daughter who had often been saved from heresy only by Rome’s intervention.²¹ He considered it insufferable presumption for anyone “to pass judgment in anything concerning her [Rome’s] ever-orthodox faith.”²² The delegation set off for Constantinople by way of southern Italy, where they stopped to visit the Byzantine governor Argyrus. This had an unfortunate effect on the mission. Patriarch Michael Keroularios of Constantinople had once refused communion to Argyrus on the grounds that he was an azymite. Humbert learned of this treatment and became further convinced of Keroularios’ disrespect for Rome. On the other hand, when Keroularios later found out that the legates had visited Argyrus he decided that they had colluded with Argyrus to alter the papal letters.

So it happened that, although Humbert and Keroularios began with a common goal – to form an alliance of papacy and empire against the Normans – their clashing personalities instead exaggerated and escalated tensions between Rome and Constantinople.²³ The embassy’s first visit to the patriarch in April 1054 ended in

acrimony, with each side claiming that the other had neglected the appropriate courtesies. Keroularios was also appalled when he read the letters they had brought him. Having recently written a rather conciliatory letter to the pope, he had expected a reasonable reply. Instead, he was confronted with Humbert's hectoring compositions. Unable or unwilling to believe that these letters had come from Leo, of whom he had heard good things, Keroularios examined the seals and decided that someone had tampered with the letters. Perhaps, he concluded, the legates were not from the pope at all. Perhaps Argyrus had sent them. After the first meeting, then, Keroularios refused to meet with the legates. In July, when Keroularios had still refused to admit them to his presence, the legates interrupted the afternoon liturgy in Hagia Sophia by walking in and depositing a bull of excommunication on the altar, on 16 July 1054. The bull did not excommunicate all members of the Greek Church, but only Keroularios and various other churchmen who had participated in the controversy. The grounds on which it condemned them were enumerated: they sold church offices, they defended clerical marriage, they rebaptized Latins, they had dropped the Filioque from the creed and so on.²⁴ With this bull in hand as evidence of the papal legates' aggression and heresy, it took only a week for Keroularios to bring the emperor and the synod over to his side. Around 24 July, he convened the standing synod to condemn these "impious and rejected men" who had come upon the church "like a wild boar," spreading diabolical confusion and hatred.²⁵

After the synod, Keroularios wrote a letter to Peter III of Antioch in which he presented himself as the victim in the whole affair.²⁶ No more humble than his Latin adversary, fiercely protective of the prerogatives of his office and not one to let the facts get in the way of making a polemical point, Keroularios repeated his claim that the legates had been imposters and that they had tampered with or outright forged the papal letters with help from Argyrus. Moreover, while Peter had previously written that azymes were the only important issue dividing the Churches, Keroularios insisted that the Latins erred in many other ways, which he proceeded to detail in a list that equaled Humbert's in its lack of discretion.²⁷ Above all, he concluded, these Latins refused to discuss any of the differences between the Churches: "they will not travel here so that they might be taught or hold discussions, but rather for teaching and persuading us to hold their dogmas."

The texts we have been discussing, from Leo of Ohrid's letter against azymes to Keroularios' letter to Peter of Antioch, have been put together to comprise a dossier for the schism of 1054, which for a long time was seen as the decisive break between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople.²⁸ But it was not. Relations between the papacy, on the one hand, and the patriarchate and empire, on the other, show no serious break after 1054 and seem to have been barely influenced by the mutual recriminations of Humbert and Keroularios.²⁹ All in all, "the schism of 1054" should not be called a schism at all; it was a quarrel between the legates and the patriarch, leading to excommunications and recriminations which neither side applied to all members of the other side and both sides were willing to forget rather soon thereafter.³⁰

Still, the texts from 1053 and 1054 exemplify the Byzantine spectrum of opinion regarding the Latins. Keroularios, Stethatos, Leo of Ohrid and others thought the Latin use of azymes was crucial. Peter of Antioch did not, and others agreed with him. Around 1089, Theophylaktos, archbishop of Ohrid (1088/9-after 1126),

received a letter which asked him “to refute, as briefly as possible, the errors of the Latins in ecclesiastical matters – errors which . . . are numerous and probably able to divide the churches.”³¹ Among the errors which some were saying the Latins committed, Theophylaktos listed the following: “offering azymes; fasting on the Sabbath; not reckoning the fast before the Passion as we do; forbidding the marriages of priests but allowing the marriages of the laity indiscriminately and without obstruction. Also – now, don’t laugh – both clerics and non-clerics shave their chins. The hands of their clerics glitter with rings, and their ecclesiastical vestments are woven of silk thread and multi-colored. Also, even their monks eat meat, and when they must worship the Lord they cleave to the ground.”³² Clearly lists of Latin errors, like the one Keroularios had included in his letter to Peter of Antioch, were circulating among the Byzantine clergy. Equally clearly, other Byzantine churchmen were reproaching such Church-dividing zeal.

In southern Italy, too, where contact between Greeks and Latins was more common than in the capital, there was a spectrum of opinion. On the one hand, there were real differences between the Greek and Latin Churches, which in a world where right ritual was crucial could be seen as cause for anathema. The azyme controversy had significant roots in Italy, as Leo of Ohrid’s letter to John of Trani indicates. So, too, the primary Constantinopolitan polemicist of 1053–4, Niketas Stethatos, claimed to be working from a dossier of materials compiled in Bari.³³ One might, then, expect this region to be the place where conflicts between Greeks and Latins boiled over, only later spreading to Constantinople. Such conflict was, however, only half the story. The other half is that the popes and Latin bishops of southern Italy did not express contempt for Greek ritual and few Greeks found the Latin presence – even Latin sovereignty – unbearable. Even when the pope recognized Norman sovereignty in southern Italy and asserted his own patriarchal rights in the region, the Latins left the Greek monasteries and many of the Greek churches unmolested. The long-lived cooperation and coexistence of Latins and Greeks provided southern Italy with reserves of understanding, tolerance and trust that could hold Rome and Constantinople together. In the long run, the cultural feud would prevail, and the tolerance and trust disappear. But this had not yet happened in the eleventh century. In that century, many Greeks and Latins in southern Italy still thought that Christian unity transcended differences of rite. This can be seen in the ways that the Greek monasteries and Greek bishops of southern Italy reacted to Norman rule and a revived papal presence in their region.

While some monasteries were destroyed or deserted during the invasion of the “Franks,” this was not necessarily a matter of religious hostility. The Normans destroyed many things – not only Greek things and not only monasteries.³⁴ What is surprising is how soon such destruction came to an end, to be replaced by at least tolerance and often generosity. Fortunately for the Greek monks, the strong tradition of coexistence in the region meshed with Norman political needs, especially in Sicily, but also on the continent. In Sicily and southern Calabria the early Norman rulers had a large Greek population to placate and often wished to avoid conflict with Constantinople. In general, therefore, the Normans who controlled southern Calabria left Greek monasteries unmolested. In fact, they often protected and patronized them.³⁵ Further north, Robert Guiscard, working to consolidate his power in northern Calabria and Apulia, did not favor Greeks as much. With the exception of

some cities, the population of the region was mostly Latin. Still, even Robert moderated his behavior as he prepared to attack Byzantium in 1081, seeking to convince Greeks in the western provinces of the empire that Norman rule would be not only bearable, but desirable.³⁶ The combination, therefore, of regional traditions and Norman political needs meant that Greek monks in Sicily and southern Italy were usually free to walk a middle road: so long as they did not oppose the pope and their Norman lords, both pope and Normans went beyond tolerance to generosity. The Italo-Greek monks could continue their Greek rites and customs without interference and even benefit from papal and Norman patronage.³⁷

The situation of the hierarchy of the Greek Church in southern Italy was fraught with more difficulties, for metropolitans, archbishops and bishops were more dependent upon patriarchs, popes and emperors, and therefore necessarily involved in politics in a way that monks need not be. Even before the coming of the Normans, the ecclesiastical provinces of southern Italy were a confused and confusing jumble of competing jurisdictions, which were loyal to the pope, Lombard dukes and the Byzantine emperor.³⁸ After the Normans began to rule, the Greek hierarchy of southern Italy faced new challenges. Unlike the monks, the bishops could not simply continue their pre-Norman lives with only a nod in the direction of the pope, for both Norman rulers and popes needed episcopal conformity. Norman lords were accustomed to bishops who were also the secular lord's efficient and trusted servants, and the reforming popes of the eleventh century sought a hierarchy which shared their reforming principles – including acceptance of papal primacy.

A straightforward narrative of what happened to Greek episcopal sees in southern Italy under the Normans is impossible unless we take a very long view. In that long view – which would have to be from the distance of the sixteenth century – all of these sees would become Latin. In the short run, however, the chronology of the transition varies greatly.³⁹ Still, a few generalizations can be hazarded. First, in some strategic places, the Normans found it necessary to have Norman prelates in place immediately after the conquest.⁴⁰ Second, in areas where the competing claims of popes, patriarchs, emperors and other secular rulers had led to disagreements about the boundaries of ecclesiastical provinces and the status of sees, the Norman conquest meant that the reformed papacy had a chance to rationalize the ecclesiastical structure and to do so in a way that maximized papal power. In doing so, it consistently acted against those bishops (many of them Latin) who had been loyal to the Byzantines.⁴¹ Third, in most areas with a population that was mostly Greek, and especially in southern Calabria, the Greek bishops were left in place so long as they were willing to submit to the pope.⁴² Thus Rossano and Santa Severina remained Greek, while Reggio di Calabria received a Latin bishop, although not enforcement of the Latin rite. The case of Reggio illustrates a final point: imposition of a Latin metropolitan, archbishop or bishop did not necessarily mean imposition of the Latin rite.

Although often seen as peripheral and *sui generis*, this situation in southern Italy is essential to our understanding of events in the empire. Although it was not only in southern Italy that each side recognized the differences between Greek and Latin rites and traditions, it was in southern Italy that the two communities lived very close together for a very long time. Italo-Greek monks and bishops were therefore often bilingual, often knowledgeable about the Latin Church, often visitors to Rome and

even frequenters of the papal court, while they remained also Greek-speakers, frequenters of the patriarchal court and travelers to the East. All of this made the more flexible and talented of these men ideal intermediaries between Rome and Constantinople – a fact which popes, emperors and patriarchs all recognized. As intermediaries between the two patriarchal sees, these Italo-Greeks influenced Constantinopolitan ideas about Latins. And because the attitudes of the Italo-Greeks were far from uniform, that influence was not univocal.

We can see all of this concretely in the negotiations between Pope Urban II and Emperor Alexios I in 1088–9. In 1088, Urban wrote to Alexios and Patriarch Nikolaos III (1084–1111) to ask why the pope was no longer commemorated in the prayers of the liturgy in Constantinople. The pope's letters were carried to Constantinople by Nikolaos, abbot of St Neilos' monastery of Grottaferrata, and by a Roman cardinal-deacon.⁴³ Nikolaos (abbot c. 1085–1122) is one of many men who left us no apology for his allegiance, but if we can judge from his actions alone he represents those Italo-Greek monks who combined in their lives and religious practice both Greek rite and papal authority. His monastery, eighty years after its foundation by Neilos of Rossano, was still a monastery of Greek rite and still directly dependent upon the Roman see. Its abbots were blessed by the popes, as Nikolaos was blessed by Gregory VII. Urban II must have trusted him implicitly to send him on such an important mission.⁴⁴

The synodal and imperial responses to the pope's query in Constantinople have been detailed elsewhere.⁴⁵ In the end, the synod authorized Patriarch Nikolaos III to write to Urban.⁴⁶ Nikolaos also chose two Italo-Greeks as his messengers: Romanos, archbishop of Rossano, and Basil, metropolitan of Reggio in Calabria.⁴⁷ Unlike Romanos, however, Basil had no high opinion of Pope Urban.⁴⁸ The Normans had taken Reggio in 1060 and left the Greek incumbent on the throne until he died in 1078 or 1079. In Constantinople, the patriarch consecrated his Greek successor, Basil, thereby maintaining both patriarchal and imperial claims to be the legitimate authorities in Calabria.⁴⁹ But the Norman ruler of Reggio had his own candidate, and the man who actually took up the episcopal staff was a Norman named Arnulf. It is probable that Basil never entered Reggio; he remained metropolitan in name only, while Arnulf ruled in fact. When the see of Reggio again became vacant Basil appeared before Pope Urban at the Council of Melfi (1089) to ask the pope to uphold his rights.⁵⁰ The pope's reply was a mixture of intransigence and compromise. On the one hand, he absolutely asserted Rome's right to jurisdiction in Calabria, and therefore denied that Basil had a right to the see because he had been ordained in Constantinople. On the other hand, he offered Basil and two other Greek bishops of Calabrian sees who were in the same situation – the aforementioned Romanos, archbishop of Rossano, and the unnamed metropolitan of Santa Severina – the following concession: if they would acknowledge papal jurisdiction, they could remain in their episcopal sees. That Urban saw this purely as a matter of asserting that southern Italy was in his patriarchate, not in Constantinople's, is clear from the offer he made Basil after Basil refused to submit to the pope. He offered to write to the patriarch of Constantinople and ask him to appoint Basil to another see, within Constantinopolitan jurisdiction. Basil refused both offers, but Romanos of Rossano and the Greek claimant to Santa Severina accepted papal jurisdiction for their Greek-rite sees.⁵¹

We do not know where Basil went after the confrontation at Melfi. We know only that he was in Dyrrachion in December 1089, where he received envoys who informed him that he and Romanos of Rossano had been commissioned to go to Rome and discuss the unity of the Churches with Urban. Horrified, he wrote an embittered letter to Patriarch Nikolaos recounting the events of the Synod of Melfi and calling Urban a pseudo-pope, a creature of the “godless Franks,” and an Arian heretic. Perhaps, as Daniel Stiernon claims, Basil had a right to be bitter about the patriarch’s behavior as much as about the pope’s. When the patriarch of Constantinople had ordained Basil, with the Normans already in control of Reggio, the ordination had been a strong statement of the patriarch’s claim to Calabria. Basil may have understood himself to be holding the fort, keeping alive patriarchal claims in the area. To have the patriarch now send him to the pope with letters that implied a willingness to overlook the pope’s interventions in the Greek episcopates of southern Italy must have seemed a betrayal.⁵²

This sequence of events encapsulates most of the important facets of the complex eleventh-century relationship between Byzantines and Latins, as well as the mixed sentiments of Byzantines regarding differences of ritual and custom. First, there is papal and imperial policy, that is, the role that high politics and diplomacy play in such matters. Alexios I and Urban II each had pressing political reasons to seek peace in 1089.⁵³ Second, even among church hierarchs there were significant differences of opinion. Given Norman secular rule, and therefore papal ecclesiastical rule, of the provinces of southern Italy, Romanos of Rossano and others acquiesced in the transfer of their dioceses from the patriarchate of Constantinople to the patriarchate of Rome. If they saw the differences between their Greek churches and the Latin churches of the area as being merely differences of language and custom, with no theological import, their recognition of papal jurisdiction had no shame attached to it. They stayed to serve their flocks, providing them with services in their traditional rite and pastoral care in their own language. After Romanos of Rossano took an oath of obedience to the pope he and his successors continued to serve a Greek congregation with a Greek liturgy; Rossano had a Greek bishop until the middle of the twelfth century. The see of Santa Severina was Greek until the middle of the thirteenth century.⁵⁴ Other Italo-Greek hierarchs disagreed and, like Basil of Reggio, remained in exile from their sees rather than accept papal jurisdiction. By making himself a martyr for patriarchal authority, Basil implied that the other Greek bishops had compromised with the devil. This intransigent position was costly for the Italo-Greeks of Reggio: in striking contrast to Rossano and Santa Severina, the see of Reggio moved permanently into Latin hands after Basil’s refusal to submit to the pope.

So by around 1090, those who thought the Latins were not in error in any heretical way were still the dominant party. Not unaware of the complications caused by Norman conquests and papal pretensions, these churchmen maintained nonetheless that the differences between the churches were not sufficient to divide Christ’s body. Does this mean that nothing had changed? On the contrary, the later eleventh century was pivotal for three major reasons. First, the increasing numbers of Latins within the empire changed relations between Greeks and Latins in many important ways. We have seen how the Latin Church in the capital became a place where Greeks and Latins argued about the Eucharistic bread. Latins within the empire

could also be mediators. The Amalfitans, for example, played many roles.⁵⁵ They founded a monastery on Mt Athos which followed customs that its Greek and Georgian neighbors admired and taught their Greek brothers about St Benedict and his Rule.⁵⁶ The Benedictines in Constantinople not only argued about azymes; they also translated Greek texts into Latin, beginning the process by which the Latin world integrated works of the Greek Fathers into its theology. Meanwhile, some Amalfitan merchants, striving to prevent the Norman conquest of their city, were involved in various attempts to arrange alliances against the Normans.⁵⁷ At the end of the century, the Amalfitans were joined, and would eventually be displaced, by the Venetians. Like Amalfi before it, Venice now had churches, houses, warehouses and wharves along the Golden Horn. More and more western merchants lived for long stretches of time in the capital.⁵⁸ Nor were merchants the only westerners in the capital and elsewhere. The Byzantine army included contingents of “Franks,” while both Alexios’ inner circle of counselors and his wider circle of clients and allies encompassed refugees from Norman Italy and other westerners.⁵⁹

Other Latins were simply passing through. For various reasons, pilgrimage from western Europe to the Holy Land gained popularity in the tenth and eleventh centuries. By the middle of the eleventh century, some pilgrimages contained thousands of people traveling the land route through Hungary to Constantinople where they stayed in hospices set up specifically for western travelers and viewed the great city’s astounding relic collection.⁶⁰ If, in the earlier Middle Ages, Constantinople had been relatively inaccessible for westerners, it now “lay on the way to somewhere else.”⁶¹ The First Crusade, the formation of the Crusader states and subsequent Crusades would bring still more Latins into the empire and increase the number of Greeks who regularly came into contact with westerners. The atrocious behavior of some Crusaders would increase the number of Greeks who considered the Latins more enemies than brothers. The suspicious and unwelcoming attitudes of some Greeks would similarly increase Latin hostility.

The changes in southern Italy are the second reason that the eleventh century was pivotal. As we have seen, the Greeks of the liminal region of southern Italy were under increasing Latin pressure. If I have stressed the ease of the transition, it is still true that there was a transition. The Greek bishops and monks of this region had to accept papal jurisdiction and a kind of minority status within the Church. They remained intermediaries between Rome and Constantinople, but they become a rather different sort of intermediary. They were more likely, for example, to serve as ambassadors from the pope to the emperor than vice versa. Third, the number and influence of those Greeks who insisted that some Latin customs were abominable was increasing. Keroularios’ list of Latin errors may have been a radical departure from a traditional tolerance of customary differences; it was certainly a radical departure from Christian charity. Unfortunately, it also became the template for longer and longer lists of Latin errors and the rallying point for an ever-larger and more vocal party of anti-Latin clergy and monks.

In the twelfth century, awareness of religious differences between Greeks and Latins continued to grow. The strongest evidence of how concerned twelfth-century Byzantines were with Latin practices is the enormous number of anti-Latin treatises they produced.⁶² In constant contact with Latin Christians, Byzantine churchmen learned of Latin customs in a variety of ways and often at times that had nothing to

do with imperial negotiations with the papacy. Their responses to this knowledge were varied and mutable. They argued not only with Latins but also with themselves and with one another about the relative importance of the differences. As numerous as the extant texts are, however, they are only the tip of the iceberg. Scattered references in all kinds of sources reveal a continuous murmur of conversation, debate and criticism. These glimpses seldom afford much detail, but they make us wonder how many other conversations left no written trace at all. So, for example, in 1112 the theologian Niketas Seides mentions that “ten or twelve years ago” a Latin, “one of your people, from among those you call cardinals,” was in Constantinople. Efforts to identify this mission have had some success, but must still be conjecture.⁶³ For kings, princes and dukes from the West, it was natural to include bishops in delegations to Constantinople as, for example, the German emperor used Anselm of Havelberg in 1135. Educated in the cathedral school of Laon, Anselm was a theologian as well as a bishop. Although in Constantinople on an imperial mission, Anselm tells us that he “had many discussions and meetings – some private, some public, with Latins or with Greeks – about these doctrinal and ritual matters”⁶⁴ and represented the Latin position in two public debates, one regarding the Filioque and the other regarding papal primacy and azymes.

It was not clear to everyone on either side that these differences were crucial. Take, for example, the biography of John of Antioch who had an illustrious career in Constantinople before he left to take up his office as patriarch of Antioch in 1091.⁶⁵ From that time until the Crusaders took the city in June 1098, John served his flock in a city ruled by Turks. During the Crusader siege of the city (October 1097 to June 1098), the Turks tortured him, prompting the Latin historian William of Tyre to refer to him as a “true confessor of Christ.”⁶⁶ After the Crusaders took control of the city, they confirmed him in his office. He remained in Antioch under Latin rule for about two years, consecrated the first Latin bishop in the region, and presided over a Church which now had both Greek and Latin clergy, churches and liturgies. In the autumn of 1100, however, he left the city. On his reasons, we have only Latin sources. Orderic Vitalis, who wrote considerably later and from a distance, reports that rumors were spreading that the patriarch was plotting to turn the city over to Alexios. Angry, whether because the rumors were true or because they were false, John fled to Constantinople.⁶⁷ William of Tyre claims that the Greek patriarch left voluntarily, “realizing that he, as a Greek, could not effectively rule over Latins.”⁶⁸ Back in Constantinople, John officially resigned the patriarchate in October 1100 and retired to the monastery of Oxeia.⁶⁹ Probably around 1101 he wrote a treatise against the Latin use of azymes.

John’s knowledge of Latin usage probably preceded his time in Antioch, but he seems to have been unconcerned about it when he first welcomed the Crusaders into his city. His actions – he was in full communion with the Latins – seem to indicate that he thought azymes, the Filioque and other Latin variations insignificant. We will never know what changed his mind, but his biography exemplifies both the potential for Greek and Latin coexistence and the ways that churchmen might be persuaded that matters they had thought inconsequential were actually crucial. In some times and places, the potential for coexistence seems to have been realized more fully than it could be in the fraught situation that was Crusader Antioch. For example, some Greek bishops in the Holy Land accepted a compromise solution in which the Greek

bishop was set up as a subordinate of the Latin bishop in the area. The Greek's role, obviously, was to be the pastor of the Greek-speaking, Greek-rite Christians in the area.⁷⁰ Like some of their brothers in southern Italy, these bishops seem to have had little trouble accepting Latin rule. Unlike those brothers, they were apparently not even required to explicitly acknowledge papal primacy.

From southern Italy to the Holy Land, then, Greeks and Latins, including clerics, were living side by side and noticing one another's customs. Probably many people did not particularly care about those differences. Others did, especially the clergy, who were naturally the most invested in the ritual forms and doctrines of their churches and therefore more likely to discuss and debate the differences between the Latin Church and the Greek Church. Emperors sometimes encouraged such discussion and sometimes tried to suppress it. Regardless, the evidence concerning twelfth-century Byzantine responses to the Latins indicates a murmur of conversation and argument both between Greeks and Latins and among the Greeks themselves.

That murmur also changed over the course of the century in response to two Latin developments: the success of the reformed papacy and the intellectual ferment of what might still be called the "twelfth-century renaissance." As Darrouzès has detailed, Byzantines only gradually came to understand the implications of the high-medieval papacy's claims to *plenitudo potestatis*.⁷¹ As they did so, their reactions were predictable. Anselm of Havelberg reports that his interlocutor in a public debate in 1136 said:

If the Roman Pontiff, seated on the lofty throne of his glory, wishes to thunder at us and, so to speak, hurl his mandates at us from on high, and if he wishes to judge us and even to rule us and our Churches, not by taking counsel with us but at his own arbitrary pleasure, what kind of brotherhood, or even what kind of parenthood can this be? We should be the slaves, not the sons, of such a Church, and the Roman See would be not the pious mother of sons but a hard and imperious mistress of slaves.⁷²

This clash of ecclesiologies was not to be resolved in the Middle Ages and it remains crucial in all later stages of the separation of the Greek and Latin Churches.

Meanwhile, Byzantines were also becoming aware of fundamental developments in Latin theology. Such awareness did not come all at once, and many books have been and will be written on the ambivalent and ambiguous nature of Byzantine responses. Still, one example may be emblematic of the kinds of problems these changes brought to the fore. In the 1160s, Hugo Eteriano, a Latin theologian who had studied the new theological methods in Paris, became one of the emperor Manuel I's (1143–80) theological advisors. When a controversy imported from the West began to disturb the peace of the Church, Manuel intervened. There ensued several heated debates in the imperial palace. The controversy was about a Christological dispute in the West at the time: what did Jesus mean when he said, "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28)? Seeking an explanation of the Latin position, Manuel summoned Hugo, whose explanation so pleased the emperor that he adopted it as his own. Nevertheless, the controversy continued to divide the clergy of the capital. In the end, Manuel persuaded, or perhaps coerced, the members of the Constantinopolitan synod to accept the theological resolution he preferred. He had the resolution

inscribed on plaques and placed in a prominent position on the walls of Hagia Sophia, where a cast copy still hangs today, in the exonarthex. The emperor was happy with this solution; perhaps a silent majority in the Church were, too. But we hear soon and often from those in the Greek Church who felt that the emperor had adopted a Latin novelty and forced it on the Church. Ironically, Hugo was not satisfied either. For although the emperor had begun with Hugo's fine-tuned, logical definition, he and his synod altered it to fit a Greek sense of theological language and tradition. In a letter to a western colleague, Hugo derided the state of Greek theological learning and condemned the synod's decision.⁷³

There are many facets of this story to explore. First, Hugo Eteriano was not a visiting bishop who happened to discuss theology with some Greeks. He was a resident of the imperial court and therefore the embodiment of the omnipresence of westerners in the empire during the reign of Manuel. Second, Hugo represents certain Latin intellectual developments. He had studied dialectic in Paris in the 1140s, and he grew frustrated with the Greek refusal to use logic in theology, especially with their fuzzy (from his perspective) definitions. Third, in another difference from earlier Latins, Hugo was able to read the Greek Fathers in their original language and to use their ideas with great sophistication. Finally, the theological issue at the heart of the debate came from the West. The issue caught the attention of a Greek ambassador in Germany not because of a disagreement between Greek and Latin doctrine — there was no such disagreement yet — but because the Latins were seeking a clearer definition of something the Greeks had never defined. Greeks were, then, becoming aware of and even embroiled in the theological controversies of the Latin world in the twelfth century.

But when this western controversy reached the East it entered a new intellectual context. Not only did the Greeks have a different set of patristic authorities, they had also gone a different direction in their use of ancient philosophy to investigate theological truth. In the eleventh century, at the very time when westerners had begun applying ancient philosophical principles to Christian theology, some Greeks had tried to do the same. In general, however, those Greek efforts had been rejected by their fellows. Greek theological speculation did not cease, but it took a vastly different form from western theology. The western quarrel about what it meant to say that the “Father is greater than the Son” was fundamentally a quarrel between two different attitudes toward the use of philosophy in theological matters and two different systems of philosophy. It was also part of a set of Christological controversies in the twelfth-century West that resulted from the exponential increase in theological speculation. The Greeks took this Latin philosophical-theological controversy and turned it into a debate about the patristic exegesis of a Scriptural phrase. It is impossible to explain briefly all the consequences of this profound difference, but it is clear that Hugo's learned explanations, the sophistication of Latin theology and, perhaps most of all, the emperor's support for the Latin position, caught many Greeks off-guard and put them on the defensive. More people now found Latin ideas threatening and were prepared to resist them at all cost. The Latins were “innovators” and the only defense was an utter rejection of their “innovations” and total reliance on the tradition of the Fathers. The Byzantines who rejected such Latin innovations may have had a point; perhaps too much logic in theology is a bad thing. Yet even at this point a few Byzantines did not reject the Latin changes outright. Some

even thought the Latins were progressing while the Greeks were stagnating, clinging to inadequate definitions and fuzzy logic when they should be embracing the philosophical refinements offered by the Latins. Whichever view one prefers, it is clear that the intellectual traditions of Greeks and Latins were diverging in remarkable ways.

There is really only one way to end an account of the twelfth-century conversations and controversies: and then came the Fourth Crusade. After the Crusading army sacked Constantinople in 1204 and set its own Latin emperor and patriarch on the imperial and patriarchal thrones, there was no going back. Efforts to reunite the churches of Rome and Constantinople in the last centuries of the empire were, much more than in earlier centuries, largely politically motivated and led (or pushed) by emperors. Popular opposition to union was consistently strong and sometimes violent. While there are notable exceptions, including the initial response of some Constantinopolitan churchmen who tried to remain in the City under a Latin patriarch, they are anomalous and rare.⁷⁴ It would still be a mistake to characterize the Palaiologan period as uninteresting in terms of Greco-Latin relations. Even the Greek empire of Nicaea, in exile from the capital which so defined the true “Emperor of the Romans,” had some intellectuals who argued that the differences between the churches were inconsequential and one emperor who promoted reunion of the Churches. Nevertheless, as a general rule, the moderate middle was silenced. In the aftermath of imperial efforts at union in the period surrounding the Second Council of Lyon (1274), Greeks who spent too much time with Latins were suspected of heresy and those who decided that the differences were inconsequential tended either to be exiled,⁷⁵ or to convert to Roman Christianity.⁷⁶ Whether Latin Scholasticism and the canonistic rigor of the twelfth-century canon lawyers in Bologna and Constantinople would have led to the irreparable schism that persists today is a moot point.⁷⁷ The violence of 1204 and the papacy’s attempts to realize its plenitude of power in the Greek churches made few Greeks willing to contemplate reunion. Crucially, it made them certain that the western Christians were “them” and not “us.” When the imperial envoys who had agreed to church union at the Second Council of Lyon returned to Constantinople, they were greeted with cries of “You have become Franks!” It is safe to say that most Byzantines now conflated ethnic and religious identities – as indeed the Christian Roman Greek empire had always done to some extent – in a way that decisively made the “Franks” of the West both ethnically other and religiously heterodox.

NOTES

- 1 Hamilton 1961; Sansterre 1983: 42–5, 47–8, 50.
- 2 Papal support for icons and the defenders of icons is remembered, for example, in the *Life of Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople*; see Talbot 1998: 81, 110.
- 3 Talbot 1998: 199–200; Sansterre 1983: 43, 128–9; ODB: s.v. Methodios I.
- 4 Dvornik 1966.
- 5 However, see Rotman in this volume.
- 6 Laourdas and Westerink 1988: 42–3. On Photios’ other complaints see Kolbaba 2000: 34–5, 39–44, 174, 184. On problems related to the textual transmission of this letter see Kolbaba 2008: 57–75.
- 7 Dvornik 1948.
- 8 This is one of the themes of Dvornik 1948; see especially Part II, chs 5–6.

- 9 ODB: s.v. Azymes; Erickson 1970; Smith 1978. Any reader who seeks a deeper understanding of what happened between Humbert and Keroularios in 1054, the many contexts of these events and the subsequent historiography would do well to begin with Smith 1978.
- 10 For a summary of the theological implications of the use of azymes, as the Byzantines saw them, see Erickson 1970; Smith 1978. I am here describing how the Byzantines perceived Armenian theology and ritual, not the symbolic weight that the Armenians themselves gave to these usages.
- 11 Darrouzès 1990; Darrouzès 1967; Erickson 1970: 175; Smith 1978: 1–66, 128–35, 140–2, 152, 156, 173.
- 12 Michel 1939.
- 13 Gay 1904: 495–7, 516–17; Smith 1978: 82, 91, 115.
- 14 For the reconstruction of the dates of all of the treatises written in 1053 and 1054, see Smith 1978: 173. Leo of Ohrid's letter, PG 120: 835–43.
- 15 Smith 1978: 174.
- 16 Gay 1904: 495; Runciman 1955a: 42.
- 17 Letter, PL 143: 744–69; Dialogues (“Adversus graecorum calumnias”), PL 143: 930–74.
- 18 Smith 1978: 92–4. The letters from Constantinople to Leo have not survived, but we know some of their content from the papal replies and from Keroularios' letter to Peter of Antioch (discussed below).
- 19 PL 143: 773–7 (to Keroularios); PL 143: 777–81 (to Monomachos).
- 20 The following account of the events in Constantinople in 1054 combines information from the following primary sources: Humbert's account, the *Brevis et succincta commemoratio*, which includes the Latin bull of excommunication, PL 143: 1001–4; Keroularios' account in the second letter to Peter of Antioch, PG 120: 781–96; the proceedings of the Greek synod which condemned the legates, PG 120: 741–6; the Greek translation of the Latin bull, PG 120: 736–48.
- 21 E.g. see paras 21–3 of the first letter from Leo IX to Keroularios (PL 143: 759–60).
- 22 PL 143: 1001, trans. Smith 1978: 98 n. 75.
- 23 Some have claimed that Keroularios opposed his emperor's plans to ally with the papacy from the start, either because he hated Argyrus so much or because he thought that alliance with the papacy would mean subordination of his see to that of Rome. Smith 1978: 84–99, has disproved this claim. Keroularios himself records that his first letter to Leo IX, which is not extant, sought to persuade the pope to join the emperor in an alliance against the Normans (in his letter to Peter of Antioch, PG 120: 784). There seems no reason to assume that he opposed the emperor's *rapprochement* with Rome.
- 24 The Bull is quoted by Humbert in his “Brevis et succincta commemoratio eorum quae gesserunt apocrisarii sanctae Romanae et apostolicae sedis in regia urbe, et qualiter anathematizati sunt Michael cum sequacibus suis,” PL 143: 1004.
- 25 PG 120: 736–48.
- 26 PG 120: 781–96.
- 27 Full translation of Keroularios' list of Latin errors in Kolbaba 2000: 23–4.
- 28 Details of how this dossier came to be compiled are in Smith 1978: 46–70.
- 29 On later Latin embassies, see Grumel 1942; Gay 1904: 512–14; Gautier 1980: 105–6; Leib 1924: 14–16; letter of Gregory VII in PL 148: 300–1. On the Greek reaction, see Kolbaba 2003.
- 30 Scholarly opinion is unanimous on this point, and has been so for nearly a century. E.g. Ostrogorsky 1969: 298: “The significance of this event [the mutual excommunications, etc.] was not realized until later, and at the time little notice was taken of it, a fact which throws considerable light on the relations between Rome and Byzantium during the previous years. Misunderstandings between the two ecclesiastical centres were all too common and no one was to guess that the quarrel of 1054 was of greater significance than earlier disputes, or that it marked a schism which was never again to be healed.” Yet this fact still has not received popular acceptance.
- 31 Theophylaktos, *Proslalia tini ton autou omileton peri on egkalountai Latinoi*, Gautier 1980: 247.
- 32 Gautier 1980: 249. On these Latin “errors,” see Kolbaba 2000: 34–5, 37–41, 44–8, 53–4, 56–7, 61–2.
- 33 Michel 1930: 320; Smith 1978: 64–5.
- 34 Loud 1988: 220–1; Morris 1995: 173–4. See Gay 1904: 481–2, for some examples of complaints of indigenous Latins about Norman atrocities.
- 35 Guillou 1980.

- 36 White 1938: 43–5.
- 37 Guillou 1963: 87–8, 92–95; Leib 1924: 106–42; Loud 1988: 218–20, 227–33; Morris 1995: 292–3; Russo 1982: 365–80; White 1938: 38–46. It should be noted that there is some disagreement on this point. L. R. Ménager 1958, 1959, argues that Normans on the continent did not patronize Greek monasteries, but instead forcibly Latinized them. There is some evidence to support this view, especially in the northernmost territories conquered by the Normans and especially in the first generation (i.e. under Robert Guiscard); see Russo 1982: 340–2, 349–50, 365. Still, it is important to distinguish (as Guillou 1963, Loud 1988 and others do) between the Latinizing of the hierarchy of the Church and Latinizing of the monasteries. Even the Latinizing of the hierarchy happened gradually (see discussion later in this chapter), while some monasteries remained Greek for centuries. Ménager’s picture of monasteries generally oppressed and forcibly Latinized cannot be sustained. For a succinct discussion of these issues, see Loud 1988: 227–33.
- 38 One has only to skim a collection such as *Convegno storico interecclesiale* 1973 to see that the bibliography on the Greek Church in Italy is immense and the stories immensely complicated. For fuller bibliographies on a given region or issue, the reader should consult that collection as well as other works cited here.
- 39 Girgensohn 1973; Loud 1988: 228–30; Russo 1973: 790–2; Laurent 1973: 14–17.
- 40 Girgensohn 1973: 39–40.
- 41 Gay 1904: 545–7; Loud 1988: 230.
- 42 See e.g. the case of Basil of Reggio, analyzed below. Herde 1973: 221–2; Girgensohn 1973: 41; Loud 1988: 229–30.
- 43 The delegation left Rome between March and August 1088, probably in early July; Stiernon 1964: 197–203.
- 44 Rocchi 1893: 22–3; Leib 1924: 105; ODB: s.v. Grottaferrata; Rocchi 1904: 27, 32; Tomassetti 1926: 300. Rocchi 1893: 23 says that Nikolaos may have been born in Constantinople, but I have not been able to find the source for this.
- 45 Most importantly, in Holtzmann 1928; see also Kolbaba 2006: 202–6.
- 46 Holtzmann 1928: doc. 3, 62–4.
- 47 Holtzmann 1928: 64.
- 48 This account is based primarily on Stiernon 1964, with additional notes from Erdmann 1977: 319 n. 42, 320 n. 46, 321 n. 48. Holtzmann 1928 found and edited the documents; Russo 1953 laid the groundwork for an understanding of Basil’s role; Stiernon 1964 offers indispensable refinements of the dates.
- 49 Consecration/ordination by patriarch of Constantinople: Laurent 1973 notes that the metropolitans of Reggio di Calabria and Santa Severina were “imports” from Constantinople. We know that Basil of Reggio was consecrated by the patriarch of Constantinople (probably in 1179), and Basil implies that his contemporaries in the sees of Rossano and Santa Severina were also consecrated by the eastern patriarch; see Holtzmann 1928: 65, ll. 5–8, 20–2, and discussion in Stiernon 1964: 193, 215.
- 50 For details about the synod of Melfi in 1089, see Holtzmann 1928: 53.
- 51 Most of this narrative is based on Basil’s letter, written in late February or March 1090, to Patriarch Nikolaos (Holtzmann 1928: doc. 4).
- 52 Stiernon 1964: 201.
- 53 Holtzmann 1928: 50–2.
- 54 Loud 1988: 233.
- 55 Balard 1976.
- 56 Lemerle 1953; Leroy 1953; Pertusi 1963; Pertusi 1953; Rousseau 1929.
- 57 Gay 1904: 528–32; Dölger 1925: no. 952.
- 58 Brown 1920.
- 59 Force 1936; Shepard 1996.
- 60 Runciman 1955b: 72–8.
- 61 Shepard 1992: 44, referring to Constantinople after the First Crusade, although I am sure that he would agree that the change begins well before the Crusade.
- 62 Even a brief look at the polemical works listed in Beck 1959: 609–29 gives the general idea.
- 63 Darrouzès 1965: 53.
- 64 Anselm, *Dialogues*, Prologue (Salet [ed.] 1966: 28; PL 188: 1140).
- 65 Gautier 1964: 131–2; ODB: s.v. John IV (V) Oxeites.

- 66 William of Tyre, *Historia* 6:23 in *Recueil des historiens des Croisades* 1844: 274; Babcock and Krey (trans.) 1943: 296–7.
- 67 Chibnall 1975: 356–7: “A Greek had held the patriarchate of Antioch under the Turkish rule, and had refused to adapt himself to the victorious Normans. They, after acquiring the principality, determined to enforce the Latin rites on clergy and people; these the Greeks, who had observed the earlier customs, presumptuously considered very unseemly. After Bohemond’s capture a rumour spread among the people that the bishop was preparing to betray Antioch to the Emperor. When he learned that such a report was current against him he was furious; whether outraged because of the purity of his clear conscience, or pricked by fear and the accusation of serious guilt I cannot say, but he abandoned his see, retired to a monastery and would never agree to return to those whose customs he detested.” One might note that Orderic is incorrect about the enforcement of Latin rites and seems not to know that the monastery where John retired was near Constantinople.
- 68 William of Tyre, *Historia* 6:23 in *Recueil des historiens des Croisades* 1844: 274; Babcock and Krey (trans.) 1943: 296–7.
- 69 Gautier 1964: 132.
- 70 Richard 1985. On the Orthodox Church, including its bishops, under Latin rule in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, see Hamilton 1980, ch. 7, “Relations with the Orthodox, 1098–1187.”
- 71 Darrouzès 1965.
- 72 PL 188: 1219; translated at Runciman 1955a: 116.
- 73 The Byzantine historians who report some version of these events are Niketas Choniates and John Kinnamos: Choniates in Magoulias 1984: 120–1 and van Dieten 1975: 211–13; Kinnamos 6:2 in Brand 1976: 189–93. Biographical details on Hugo can be found in Dondaine 1952; Dondaine 1958: 480–2. Details of the meetings of the synod in 1166 and its aftermath, including Hugo’s reaction: Classen 1955. The marble tablets: Mango 1963, with edition of the inscription 324–30.
- 74 Heisenberg 1922.
- 75 As were John Bekkos and George Metochites after repudiation of union in 1282.
- 76 As did Demetrios Kydones and Barlaam the Calabrian.
- 77 On the role of Scholasticism, Papadakis and Meyendorff 1994. On canon law, see Dennis 1986.

PART II

THE WRITTEN WORLD

When Constantine refounded the city of Byzantion as Constantinople, he continued to conduct the empire's official business in Latin. That Constantine's Greek was poor even Eusebius cannot hide, and so the language of the court became Latin. Still, most early Byzantine literature, in the first few centuries after the founding of Constantinople, was written in Greek enriched and transformed by contact with Slavic, Semitic and Caucasian languages and cultures and others within the sphere of influence of the East Roman empire. From the sixth century Greek was also the language of literature and government, secular and ecclesiastical. The laws of the empire were translated into Greek and but a few calcified Latin terms and phrases were preserved, by the tenth century, as designations or acclamations. Despite the dominance of Greek, other tongues were heard throughout the empire. If Latin was no longer widely known, there were those in Constantinople sufficiently skilled to conduct official business, and others who learnt to communicate with traders and travellers from the West. Constantine, a famous Byzantine linguist of the ninth century better known as St Cyril, certainly knew Latin, and taught himself to read "Russian" – that is, Scandinavian runes – in Cherson on a legation to the Khazars, where he debated in Hebrew. For a later mission he invented an alphabet to represent the sounds of the Slavic tongue, in order that Scripture might be translated. The complex Glagolitic was later adapted by a second Constantine, of Preslav, using a modified Greek alphabet. The new letters were renamed in honour of Cyril, and forms of Cyrillic are still in daily use by hundreds of millions from Siberia to the Adriatic, testament to the willingness of the Byzantines to recognize the Slavic languages as suitable for Christian worship. The Slavonic liturgy was roundly condemned in Old Rome, but acknowledged by the patriarchate of Constantinople. This should come as no surprise, for Scripture and liturgy had long been written and celebrated in the Caucasian languages, and although not without controversy the Christian churches of Armenia and Georgia, of equal antiquity to that of Constantinople, were generally accorded autocephalous status.

If St Cyril was exceptional in his linguistic abilities, he was not alone in moving between the equally literate worlds of the court and the Church. As Catherine Holmes demonstrates in her careful study of political literacy, the Byzantine world

was one of “multimedia” exchanges, where visual, oral and textual messages were communicated together, and together reinforced social networks and hierarchies. Byzantine citizens lived in a rich graphical landscape, surrounded by antique and contemporary inscriptions. Building on work by Margaret Mullett and others, Holmes shows “that Byzantine literacy from the ninth century onwards existed in a dynamic relationship with other modes of communication and social behaviour.” Writing also manifested authority, however poor the spelling, and rich and poor alike were confronted with documents produced by the imperial bureaucracy, including legal codes and compilations, new edicts (novels) and golden-sealed documents of validation (chrysobulls) and the sealings that secured them, tax registers and demands (*praktika*). The rich wrote their own letters, to cement friendships or foment rebellions, and issued their own documents, including monastic foundation documents (*typika*), to protect themselves and their families against encroachments, largely by the state. And as the middle empire expanded from the later ninth to the later eleventh centuries – demographically, economically and territorially – one can detect a “demand-led” growth in literacy which provoked reactions from emperors, resistant to the encroachments of bureaucrats. Holmes’ intriguing formulation draws cleverly on Chris Kelly’s exploration of the late Roman state, but concludes in her own realm, the empire of Basil II.

Holmes devotes attention to Kekaumenos, who offered his curmudgeonly provincial advice to eleventh-century generals. Dennis Sullivan, in Chapter 12, provides the richest of contexts for this text in his masterful survey of a greatly neglected genre of literature, military manuals. Addressing those composed by both armchair strategists and real generals, by or for emperors, addressed to anonymous or known commanders, Sullivan reveals the ever-changing calibration of traditional and contemporary considerations. Most striking are the prescriptions of the ninth- and tenth-century *taktika*, which transport the reader to the zone of frontier engagement between eastern Christendom and Islam, as the Abbasid caliphate fragmented.

In Chapter 13, Michael Featherstone addresses a single practical handbook, devoted to court ceremonial, and divines from it the changing structure and functions of the Great Palace in Constantinople. The *De cerimoniis*, which was compiled in the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos and revised two decades later under Nikephoros Phokas, contains descriptions of court ceremonies from the sixth century to the later tenth. In the Porphyrogenitos’ day the key space was the throne room or Chrysotriklinos, an octagonal hall built or reconstructed by Justin II (565–78), which now served as “the interface between the private apartments of the emperor . . . and the public parts of the palace.” Its vaults and domes were decorated with religious images so that the hall resembled a church, but it was used not for the liturgy but to receive officials, for promotions and for the “everyday procession.” Featherstone takes on the role of *papias*, the door-keeper, who at the first hour unlocks the gates for us and draws aside the many heavy curtains, so that we may see the emperor seated on his *sellion*, to the right of the throne, and dressed appropriately for the given day. Far more might be expected on feast-days, when the full assembly of officials would appear suitably robed and the crowned emperor would occupy the central throne to receive the *proskynesis*, the low bow of adoration, from his subjects, before a grand procession would head for Hagia Sophia. On great feasts one might also expect grand banquets in the Nineteen Couches and to hear a good deal of oratory.

As Emmanuel Bourbouhakis reminds us, in Chapter 14, towards the beginning of his provocative study of rhetoric and performance, “there were always a great many more listeners in Byzantium than readers,” and “the better part of the texts which have come down to us . . . were composed for some form of recital.” Is “literature” even an appropriate term, we are asked, in those cases when the written word existed to serve the demands of elocution, of performance, when it was “a script rather . . . than a text”? There are clues, as Reinsch has argued, in punctuation. The same oratorical talents were demanded of those who would deliver homilies as imperial panegyrics, or indeed eulogies for the dead, the most frequent demand on an orator’s time and skills. One might have difficulty trusting Michael Choniates when he complains of the need to place style over substance to impress his audience, like a performing monkey, particularly given his own CV and that of his mentor, Eustathios of Thessalonika. Both men were rewarded with bishoprics in large part for their talents as court orators.

Letter-writing, epistolography, was a highly rhetorical art. Bourbouhakis describes John Italikos’ reaction upon hearing, not reading, the letter of a Caesar (in fact the emperor’s son-in-law), “which dripped like honey onto” his ears. Likewise, the chapter by Stratis Papaioannou on letter-writing begins with a rhetorical flourish: the writer, John Mauropous, will “speak with brevity, but, for you, I speak in a penetrating, sweet voice,” through his pen. He speaks to his friend, or better yet his friends, gathered together in a *theatron* – a pre-modern “social-networking site” – to listen together and to respond to the language and news. Letters were exchanged by those who had arrived, and by those who aspired to join them, in the empire’s highest echelon. The letter was the principal means to maintain and build friendships at a distance, and most letters would be accompanied by gifts. Friendship as expressed in the letters that we may now still read, Papaioannou reminds us, must be understood as something shared by groups of erudite and political men – the first and only surviving examples of a woman’s letters date to the fourteenth century – and the letter “should be placed somewhere at the intersection of politics and literature.” The rhetorical and public nature of the letter from its inception explains the tendency to preserve and publish the finest examples, which then reached a wider audience, although the scarcity of surviving manuscripts suggests that this was never so wide as many other forms of literature. The models to be emulated were set by the fourth century AD, and intertextuality – “an author’s use of the texts of others in order to convey meaning” – was *de rigueur*. The phrase with which Chapter 15 begins, Mauropous’ own “penetrating, sweet voice,” is revealed to be that of Menelaus, in the words of Homer, praising concision, but now excusing the writer for the (rhetorical) inadequacy of the accompanying gift.

Letter-writing was an urban pursuit, which rose and fell as a practice – or at least the preservation of letters fell and rose – with the fate of cities. Epistolography flourished in the sixth century, but not again until the tenth when it was sustained through the twelfth century. It suffered after 1204 until the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, “the last minor bloom.” Where Papaioannou claims that letter-writing came closest to what we regard as literature, for it stressed a “unique appreciation of imagination,” of fiction rather than the pursuit of truth or the desire to instruct, Livanos (Chapter 16) would have us assign that role to poetry. In a compelling overview of Byzantine poetry, we are urged neither to suspend aesthetic

judgement nor to judge unfairly the works of such masters as Christopher of Mytilene and (the same) John Mauropous, who “are subtle in their allusions, often ironic, and complex in their symbolism and imagery.” Bringing to bear his expertise in Latin poetry of the western lands of Christendom, *Beowulf* and Petrarch are invoked for contrast, although this is no fruitless hunt for “a Byzantine Chaucer or Dante.”

Anthony Kaldellis, in Chapter 17, whose concern is Byzantine historiography in the middle and later periods, offers an equally expansive and erudite interpretation. In his essay, the writing of history is presented as one narrative in many voices, a continuation of Roman history following Greek principles. It was the history of an elite by an elite, certainly, almost exclusively male, and composed by authors trained in rhetoric for whom writing history was an opportunity to demonstrate erudition, but also a pleasure. Their methods, like their interests, were rather different to ours, and Byzantinists in search of truths must look a little deeper to find them, following the paths cleared by classicists.

A different type of truth may be found in the lives of saints, *vitae*, and two chapters are devoted to hagiography. In the first, Youval Rotman suggests that Greek hagiography in southern Italy and Sicily served a variety of political and cultural purposes in the region. Rather than treat it as peripheral to the vision of sanctity produced in the centre of the empire, one must consider it on its own terms, and in two phases. First, one notes a Christian fascination with Jews and fictional Montanists in the eighth and ninth centuries, whereby local issues might be played out far from the Constantinopolitan concern with Iconoclasm. Later, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, hagiographers addressed the quotidian concerns associated with the Arab expansion across the Mediterranean, and saints were advanced as local leaders for the protection of communities from harm and forced conversion. A compelling counterpoint is provided, in the perspective of a Jewish source.

In the second chapter devoted to hagiography, Alice-Mary Talbot offers a fascinating commentary on a particular fourteenth-century saint’s life, of which she will publish an independent English translation. A meticulous survey of the miracles performed by Palamas, once patriarch and later saint, both in life and once dead, demonstrates his efficacy in curing all manner of ailments, but particularly constipation and other embarrassing and distressing conditions of the bowel and gastrointestinal tract. Palamas reappears towards the end of Joseph Munitiz’s edifying survey of Byzantine spiritual literature (Chapter 20), from the sixth-century *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* to the eighteenth-century *Philokalia*, where the writings of the Palamists and other hesychastic champions were collected. In between we are introduced to major collections of “beneficial tales” such as those attributed to Anastasios of Sinai and Paul of Monemvasia. Here too we meet Symeon Metaphrastes, who in the later tenth century abridged and transformed the lives of 150 saints for inclusion in a ten-volume *Menologion*, a collection of *vitae* arranged by the date on which the saint was celebrated in the church calendar; and Paul of Evergetis, whose *Synagoge* of c. 1050 collected into four books spiritual texts, largely of the fourth to seventh centuries, and has survived in more than eighty manuscripts. The *Synagoge* makes plain the “Christ-centred aspect of much Byzantine spiritual writing and its stress on the Passion as a remedy for human sinfulness,” and Munitiz explores both its sources

and its challenges, but also its omissions, notably most of the “great” patristic Fathers, including Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom, but also Symeon the New Theologian. The greatest departure from the *Synagoge* came in the fourteenth century, with the advent of Palamism, which practice centred on the “prayer of the heart,” also called the “Jesus Prayer”: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

POLITICAL LITERACY



Catherine Holmes

Historians working on medieval cultures outside the Byzantine empire sometimes see Byzantium and literacy as virtual synonyms. Byzantium's self-proclaimed status as the continuation of the Roman empire, its apparent disdain for its "barbarian" neighbours and its later reputation among scholars as the preserver of Hellenic culture, can all lead to the general supposition that the Byzantine empire was governed according to complex bureaucratic procedures, and that this system was run by a large and well-educated class of civil servants, all of whom had a profound knowledge of the classical world. Byzantinists themselves, on the other hand, have not always been so convinced by this bookish image, particularly for the centuries after AD 650. Since the 1970s it has often been argued that the number of individuals in Byzantium whose literacy skills or book-owning habits were sufficiently advanced to read and understand classical Greek literature remained tiny throughout the medieval period.¹ In addition, recent studies have suggested that the medieval empire often preferred to use relatively few bureaucrats and simple mechanisms of administration wherever possible rather than relying on vast armies of learned administrators and complex procedures.² Of course, this relatively negative picture of learning and written culture in Byzantium has been challenged. Revisionist appraisals have suggested a creative Byzantine engagement with the classical tradition.³ And even if the study of literacy in Byzantium remains embryonic compared with treatments by western medievalists, initiatives have still been taken in this direction. No longer is consideration of Byzantine literacy limited to the classical interests of a handful of highly educated senior administrators in Constantinople; instead a much broader range of texts, materials, scribes, audiences and functions are now considered legitimate objects of study.⁴ Nonetheless, despite this more catholic approach, scholars of the medieval empire have yet to think extensively about the intersection of literacy with politics. This lack of engagement contrasts with assessments of late antique Byzantium, where literacy has been seen as a vital adhesive in the relationship between imperial authority and provincial elites. According to this model, Constantinople's provision of offices and salaries to those with the requisite literacy skills provided substantial incentives to provincial elites to invest in education.⁵ Neglect of the relationship between politics and literacy in later Byzantine

centuries also compares unfavourably with recent treatment of the Rus, a near neighbour of medieval Byzantium.⁶

In this chapter I want to examine the relationship between politics and literacy in medieval Byzantium. I shall be less concerned with literacy as a set of acquired reading and writing skills, and more with how written culture shaped the expectations and behaviour of those involved in politics. This is not to suggest that other forms of political action did not exist, or that the relationship between literacy and power was unchanged from early Byzantium. Instead I shall develop thoughts first proposed by Margaret Mullett that Byzantine literacy from the ninth century onwards existed in a dynamic relationship with other modes of communication and social behaviour.⁷ I shall suggest that those who were associated with imperial government in Constantinople were vital participants in this relationship, but that there were other key players further afield. I will focus my attention most closely on the tenth and eleventh centuries but will also touch on earlier periods too for purposes of comparison.

The starting point for any analysis of the role of literacy in politics must be the fact that all those who exercised or were touched by power in Byzantium operated in a graphically rich landscape.⁸ From the emperor down to the lowliest taxpayer, medieval Byzantines were constantly exposed to script even if they could not read or write themselves. One reason for this was the survival of inscribed materials from the more remote past. At one level this survival resulted from the copying and editing of texts from antiquity; but even individuals far removed from such lofty, literary enterprises were likely to encounter antique script regularly. Inscribed stones and statues from earlier centuries were ubiquitous in medieval Byzantium and were frequently reused in later domestic buildings, fortifications and churches. Nor was Byzantium's rich graphic landscape merely composed of ancient artefacts. Members of the political elite who held imperial offices often used writing as a means of displaying their status, whatever their own personal capabilities as readers and writers. Such display could include the sponsoring of manuscripts but also the commissioning and renovation of precious objects and buildings inscribed with their patron's name. That writing could be a status symbol is evident in the prominent place that the elite awarded to books in the *typika* (foundation documents) of the monasteries they established.⁹

Writing, then, was significant as the residue of a past culture and as a marker of social cachet; but there were other contemporary reasons for the ubiquity of written culture in Byzantine political contexts, above all the production of texts and inscribed objects by imperial government. These included normative codes such as the *Basilike*, the ninth-century reworking of late antique Roman law, as well as shorter legal digests, handbooks to particular sections of the law and fresh edicts known as novels.¹⁰ In addition there were practical records related to administrative process, such as tax registers, lists of those in the state's military service, and documents of validation and confirmation known as chrysobulls. To the list of inscribed materials connected to government can be added coins, the most common means by which subjects encountered their rulers; and lead seals, enormous numbers of which were produced during the ninth to twelfth centuries to authenticate documents.

If a rich graphic environment constitutes one element of political literacy in medieval Byzantium, then another was a contemporary expectation that those with power should be able to exercise command over the written word. That is to say,

many sources make it clear that those in public office, including the emperor, the patriarch, bishops, generals, judges and tax collectors, should be well educated and willing to be guided by the practical wisdom of earlier generations as it appeared in written form. This view is particularly conspicuous in Byzantine appraisals of the mid-tenth-century emperor Constantine Porphyrogenetos. The anonymous historian of the sixth book of *Theophanes continuatus* enthusiastically attributed the revival of philosophy, rhetoric, geometry and astronomy to Constantine, while alleging that the emperor liked to chose his leading civil and clerical officials from those who had trained to the highest level in these subjects. Constantine's sponsorship of various compilations of practical knowledge, including the *De administrando imperio* and *De cerimoniis*, add to the impression that control over practical knowledge in its written form was considered an important credential for ruling the empire.¹¹

Of course, there are many reasons for questioning whether Constantine was responsible for any of the projects he is said to have sponsored; whether he himself was learned in any manner at all; or whether those texts associated with his name were of any contemporary "use." However, the condition of Constantine's intellect and the nature of the texts he sponsored may not be the most relevant issues.¹² The more salient point is that Byzantium was characterized by a political culture in which those charged with office were expected to exhibit command over the medium of writing. Such a context makes sense of the actions of Constantine's grandfather and father, Basil I and Leo VI. Both emperors were associated with the compilation and rationalization of legal materials, and in the case of Leo, with a radical update of late antique military science.¹³ A similar need to be demonstrably learned may explain why the later tenth-century emperor Nikephoros Phokas did not simply conduct successful military campaigns against Byzantium's neighbours but also commissioned written records of martial tactics.¹⁴ Late on in the eleventh century, the historian Michael Attaleiates promoted the imperial credentials of his hero Nikephoros Botaneiates by emphasizing his military experience and the fact that he spent day and night studying books.¹⁵ Nor were such promotional strategies simply excessive spin-doctoring; such allegations seem to have been responses to wider cultural expectations. According to Kekaumenos, the author of an eleventh-century manual of maxims and wisdom known as the *Admonitions and Anecdotes*, generals should spend every spare moment of the day devouring reading material, including military treatises, histories and the Bible.¹⁶

Yet, one could question how far Kekaumenos' picture of the learned imperial servant really reflected practical politics in medieval Byzantium. The fact that Kekaumenos thought it important to offer this advice may itself suggest that reading was not always as frequent among Byzantine officials as he wished. But a more significant reason for doubting Kekaumenos' prescription is that Byzantine politics can often appear to be characterized by practices far removed from the written medium. Some of the most powerful and feared of Byzantine emperors had a reputation for administering the empire with little reverence for written law or administrative procedure. Michael Psellos alleged that Basil II (976–1025), "governed not in accordance with written laws but following the unwritten dictates of his own intuition." He also claimed that Basil's court was unfriendly to those with literary pretensions.¹⁷ Moreover, even during the reigns of emperors with carefully crafted

images as learned rulers, government and politics were often conducted more through visual, performed and material media than through the written word.¹⁸ Many Byzantine rulers, particularly those with weak claims to imperial legitimacy, ensured that their first political act was the distribution of largesse to the most significant members of the Byzantine society, including generals, civil administrators and the Constantinopolitan urban elite.¹⁹ Meanwhile, emperors sought to maintain their grip through regular and elaborate ceremonies at which salaries of gold coins, precious objects and luxurious fabrics were disbursed.²⁰ As Michael VI discovered in 1056–7, to fail to reward the most politically important figures, especially the generals, with the salaries and titles they believed their due could provoke military revolt.²¹

While giving material rewards was important in Byzantine political culture, just as significant was the perception of imperial munificence. In this context, the apparently endless cycle of ceremonies centred on the Great Palace and Hagia Sophia formed one of the most important means by which emperors could display their own authority, and senior officials and courtiers their status and influence.²² Political ambition, reward and authority could also be represented, cultivated and even thwarted through other sorts of ceremonies, especially victory parades through the streets of Constantinople. Such displays were opportunities to celebrate victories over external foes or internal rebels, but also very convenient vehicles for the ritualized humiliation of the defeated. Stories of vanquished rebels sitting backwards on donkeys bearing the physical disfigurements of their punishments (beatings, blindings and mutilations) are common in Byzantine historiography. Triumphs also alert us to the importance that ceremony played in the conduct of foreign relations. On rare occasions captured external foes would be trampled underfoot by emperors or divested of their royal insignia during such processions.²³ But even more routine diplomacy was often conducted through theatrical and visual media, including awe-inspiring receptions and lavish banquets.²⁴ When the Byzantines wished to impress foreigners, it has been argued that they preferred to invoke monuments, relics, icons, ceremonies and long-standing traditions associated with the city of Constantinople rather than use sophisticated written records. Indeed, the very wealth of the Constantinopolitan visual repertoire may have meant that the Byzantines had little incentive to produce the kinds of detailed official historiographies that were developed for the purposes of diplomacy in the Carolingian world and early medieval China.²⁵

Acknowledging the importance of visual, performed and material methods of conducting politics and governing the empire is important. But, as we have already seen, however numerous were these alternative modes of political action and representation, written culture was still ubiquitous in Byzantium in political contexts. What are we to make of this symbiosis of the written and non-written?

There is a spectrum of potential answers to this question. One consideration is that the most important dimension to writing in Byzantium was its value as a symbol of authority rather than its use in practical government and politics. Such a context may make sense of a case like that of the Graptoi in the early ninth century. These were iconophile monks whom the iconoclast emperor Theophilos punished by publicly tattooing their foreheads with a verse summary of their crimes and subsequent punishments.²⁶ That the Byzantines themselves saw writing as a manifestation of authority, and more importantly wished outsiders to be apprised of the same mes-

sage, also comes across in Constantine VII's recommendation that any foreigners who wished to borrow imperial vestments should be told about a curse engraved into the high altar of Hagia Sophia which promised doom to those who misused such symbols of imperial rule.²⁷ The other advantage to adopting this authority-centred reading is that it may also help to explain certain puzzling features about written culture in Byzantium: these include misspellings and grammatical errors in inscriptions on expensive objects and buildings patronized by emperors and senior officials, as well as the apparently unfinished nature of many high-status written projects, such as the *De administrando imperio*, the *De cerimoniis* and the imperially sponsored collection of saints' lives known as the *Metaphrastic Menologion*. Such apparent sloppiness, inaccuracy and untidiness have sometimes been explained in terms of lack of education or as evidence that the Byzantines were more concerned about communication than correct orthography.²⁸ An alternative possibility is that it was not *what* was written that mattered in such contexts, but *that* it was written at all and in whose name. In these circumstances, correct spelling and completeness was far less important than graphic presence.

According to this authority-centred reading, writing in political and diplomatic contexts makes best sense when it is seen as an extension of the basically visual and ceremonial political culture of Byzantium. Yet, closer examination of the construction, function and transmission of Byzantine written culture may suggest that a purely ceremonial reading is rather too reductive, and that instead the relationship between writing and other media was more nuanced. That is to say, we ought to consider Margaret Mullett's suggestion that writing was simply one way amid a series of other possibilities by which Byzantines communicated with each other.

Mullett's suggestions for a multimedia approach were developed as part of an explanation for the practice of letter-writing among members of the Byzantine political elite in the ninth to twelfth centuries. As Mullett herself pointed out, surviving collections of letters suggest that epistolography was ubiquitous among the political elite and was an important means by which those charged with imperial governance kept in contact across vast geographical spaces.²⁹ However, letters did not operate in a vacuum. Instead, the sending of a letter was part of a much broader communicative system which included oral messages as well as presents such as food, wine and books. Mullett's interpretation of the mutually reinforcing roles of writing, recitation and gift exchange was that this web of communications helped to create and maintain friendship, the social structure fundamental to a shared group identity among the governing elite in Byzantium. As such, Mullett's arguments give written culture a strongly political dimension, but one that is essentially cohesive and consensual.³⁰ Critics of such a model could argue, however, that far from being cohesive, Byzantine politics were characterized by disintegration, competition and sometimes bloodshed. Does this more agonistic dimension to Byzantine politics negate the political role assigned to writing by Mullett? Not necessarily, for if anything, close examination of political competition in Byzantium reinforces Mullett's suggestions about the importance of writing in political society.³¹ Thus, writing is conspicuous in historical and hagiographical accounts of military revolts and palace plots. Such narratives tell us that rebels communicated with fellow insurgents by letter. Usurpers announced their credentials for government in manifestoes, some of which, including those issued by Bardas Skleros, George Maniakes and Katakalon Kekaumenos in the

tenth and eleventh centuries, survive embedded within later medieval histories. Meanwhile, emperors sent out letters to defuse rebellion or to incite defections. Oaths between associates were confirmed in writing. Slanders and forgiveness were often written down. Rewards for defending imperial authority were endorsed by imperial chrysobull. References to rebellions shaped diplomatic correspondence between the Byzantine court and its neighbours.³²

Of course, written culture did not operate in isolation during revolts. It is likely that envoys bearing letters also transmitted oral messages that expanded on or even changed suggestions in the written media.³³ Moreover, political alliances crystallized in writing did not always endure. Oaths were regularly broken and alliances collapsed. But, this should not belittle the significance of writing during rebellion. At a pragmatic level writing was a useful tool by which short-term alliances could be forged in a political culture whose most significant members often lived so far apart from each other. But there may have been other functions to writing as well. For even if rebels were frequently motivated by personal ambition and cupidity, they usually justified their actions by a rhetoric that emphasized the empire's common good. For such rhetoric to resonate, it was important for insurgents to emphasize their own credentials in government. In this context the most important device available to a rebel was the lead seal that conveyed details of his current (and even past) offices and titles. One of the easiest ways of broadcasting those public service credentials was by dispatching a sealed document. In this sense, what was actually written in the document may have been less important than the seal that it bore.

Yet, is this suggestion that seals were more significant than written content simply further evidence that the primary political importance of writing in Byzantium was as a symbol of authority? Again, an affirmative answer to this question is too reductive, particularly if we take into account the broader practical administrative contexts within which lead seals themselves were produced and used. Establishing these broader contexts is not in itself an easy task. Research into Byzantine sigillography is still developing in sophistication, and questions of provenance, circulation and use are still underexplored. But, even in these circumstances it is clear from surviving evidence that seals were one of a series of tools related to writing that enabled those charged with imperial government to conduct the practical business of the empire. This evidence includes documents relating to property arrangements and disputes which were issued by local officials in the name of the emperor, and which are now stored in the archives of the monasteries on Mt Athos, at the monastery of St John on Patmos and in ecclesiastical archives in southern Italy.³⁴ A large cache of seals found at Preslav, an important administrative centre in eastern Bulgaria during the later tenth and early eleventh centuries, also supports a picture of government by writing.³⁵ The Preslav seals also illuminate the very complex paths that seals and the documents they authenticated could follow, criss-crossing between central government, provincial administrators and to those operating beyond the imperial frontiers as well.³⁶ Literary evidence too indicates that officials frequently communicated with each other by letter about public affairs. Two extant orations by Constantine VII request that the emperor should be kept informed in writing about military matters by his generals. Letters discussing military affairs pass between imperial officials, including the emperor himself, with some regularity in the *Synopsis Historion* of John Skylitzes.³⁷

Although it is somewhat speculative to leap from practical administration to broader patterns of political behaviour, nonetheless, if emperors, generals and local officials could communicate with each other in writing about matters of day-to-day government, it is likely that messages with deeper political import could also have been conveyed along similar channels. Moreover, the administrative use of writing in Byzantium may not simply provide important clues about the role that literacy could play in politics at the apex of Byzantine society, but also at more provincial levels too. Important here is evidence that the use of writing by imperial administrators prompted literate responses on the part of local political actors, above all the practice by provincial institutions and individuals of archiving documents which confirmed their landed holdings and fiscal obligations. The growth of archives can be illustrated at a general level by the documentary collections of institutions such as the Athonite monasteries, but there are more specific examples too, including the *typikon* for the monastery of Georgian monks established by Gregory Pakourianos at Backhovo in Bulgaria in 1085. A striking feature of his *typikon* is the great care that Pakourianos took about the storage of chrysobulls relating to the estates he had gained during the course of his career.³⁸ Pakourianos was an extremely experienced and exceptionally wealthy general whose *typikon* indicates how senior officials developed personal archives over many years as part of an arsenal to protect their own status and possessions. Such documents could in turn become the basis for an institutional collection. However, the *Admonitions and Anecdotes* of Kekaumenos suggests that such archiving practices were not limited to those with substantial political clout in central government alone. His text, thought to emanate from a provincial milieu in central Greece, appears to include important documents from what appears to be a family archive, including important correspondence between members of the author's kin group and the emperor. Within this family archive one can even detect a defensive apology issued by a member or associate of Kekaumenos' family, Nikoulitzas Delphinas in the 1060s, a text that seems akin to the personal manifestoes issued by generals such as Bardas Skleros, George Maniakes and Katakalon Kekaumenos.³⁹

However, as recent research also reveals, literate practices in the Byzantine localities did not develop as merely defensive mechanisms to protect the properties and reputations of communities and individuals from the state. Instead as Charlotte Roueché's very detailed study of the structures and content of the *Admonitions and Anecdotes* has indicated, provincials may, at least in the eleventh century, have used the medium of writing to engage with the political culture of the Constantinopolitan governing elite far more creatively. The contents of Kekaumenos' advice book show that he was enthused by the same political questions and events as more high-profile figures associated with imperial governance, especially bureaucrats with literary enthusiasms, such as John Skylitzes and Michael Psellos. Mirroring Psellos in the *Chronographia*, Kekaumenos reports on the advice about imperial governance given to Basil II by the rebel Bardas Skleros. Meanwhile both Kekaumenos and Skylitzes convey very similar narratives of the account of the revolt of the Bulgarian prince Alousianos against Emperor Michael IV. However, it is not only content but also genre which point towards a sharing of political interests between centre and locality. For as Roueché has shown, Kekaumenos' handbook followed the genre of advisory literature which had recent parallels in Byzantine metropolitan literary

culture, including the admonitions about correct imperial order found in the preface to Constantine Porphyrogennetos' manual on client-management, the *De administrando imperio*. But even more important than common content and genre for notions of a shared political culture in provinces and capital, is Roueché's argument that Kekaumenos had received, albeit at a rudimentary level, the same kind of rhetorical training enjoyed by his literary counterparts in Constantinople. This is evident from the way in which Kekaumenos follows the prescriptions on the writing of short narratives (*diegemata*) and the deployment of maxims (*gnomai*) found in the late antique rhetorical handbooks (*progymnasmata*) that were still used in Byzantine education during the medieval centuries. Furthermore, the quotations that Kekaumenos uses as handy maxims suggests that he had access to a wide body of literature from both the contemporary and ancient worlds either directly or through *florilegia*.⁴⁰

Most of Roueché's arguments about the sharing of education, genre and literary content in the localities and imperial centre are developed from a close reading of the internal structures of Kekaumenos' text. However, other evidence points in the same direction, most notably the will of Eustathios Boilas, *protospatharios* and *hypatos*, that was drawn up on Byzantium's eastern frontier in 1059.⁴¹ This confirms that middle-ranking provincial figures had access to quite considerable reading materials. Thus, Boilas bequeathed to his monastic foundation near Edessa a library of more than ninety items from diverse genres. Of course this evidence in itself cannot tell us that Boilas was well read himself; his library could simply be a status symbol. More interesting are the other ways in which the will points to provincial analogues for the political use of writing at the imperial centre. These parallels surface when Boilas refers to his ambiguous relationship with the Apokapes family, a kin group of Georgian origin which held senior offices on the eastern frontier. As such, the Apokapes family have often been seen as powerful local lords in whose private service Boilas had procured his titles and salaries from Constantinople. And certainly the fact that Boilas made representatives of the family the executors of his will suggests a close local and personal bond. Yet this was clearly not an easy relationship, and, as the will itself indicates, Boilas had once had some of his properties sequestered by the Apokapes clan. The terseness of Boilas' testament makes it difficult to determine exactly how this asymmetrical relationship had developed, but what does emerge is that written culture was considered by contemporaries to be as integral to politics on the frontiers of Byzantium as in Constantinople itself. Thus, Boilas states: "I have not consciously been treacherous . . . against him [the *doux*, Michael Apokapes] or his children . . . or contrived or *written* anything slanderous, but rather I have striven without deceit or artifice on their behalf . . . I have accomplished great and unexpected things . . . although I have been slandered by them."⁴²

The Kekaumenos and Boilas case studies point towards to a dynamic role for writing in political life in the provinces as well as at the imperial centre. But in which direction did this dynamic move? From Constantinople out or from the provinces in? This may seem an odd question given the stress which is so often placed on the degree to which all forms of social, economic and cultural life in the Byzantine provinces were focused on the capital. In such circumstances surely any congruence between the written and political cultures of Constantinople and the localities can only be explained in terms of the demands of the centre? And, indeed, this chapter has

already pointed in this direction by suggesting that communities and individuals in the provinces adopted literate practices, such as the archive, in order to function within and protect themselves from the Byzantine state. The fact that certain individuals from middling provincial origins, such as Kekaumenos and Boilas, went beyond simple familiarity with the record-keeping habits of the centre to more far-reaching uses of written culture could also be explained as a centre-out phenomenon. That is to say, it is possible that the demands of imperial administration in the provinces led to the emergence of better educated and more politically aware local functionaries. Nor is this suggestion merely intuitive. The sigillographical record certainly makes it clear that provincial administration itself expanded significantly during the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁴³ There is also evidence that emperors were keen to ensure that those with responsibility for provincial governance should be more highly educated.⁴⁴ Although such initiatives to expand administration and improve education undoubtedly started in Constantinople, a trickle-down effect into the localities may have occurred, so that provincials who wished to participate in imperial governance found it increasingly necessary to acquire basic literacy skills. If this was so, then the political role that literacy played in medieval Byzantium may bear similarities to late antiquity: that in return for the salaries and status that service to Constantinople brought, local notables were willing to invest in education.

However, was Constantinople really such a significant catalyst for Byzantine written and political culture? There are some reasons for doubt. On the one hand, although imperial administrative structures undoubtedly proliferated in the tenth and eleventh centuries, both historiographical and sigillographical evidence suggest that large areas of the empire, especially on the frontiers, remained relatively lightly governed by Constantinople. In the borderlands, local potentates and their own functionaries often held the practical reins of power, with only minimal supervision by a representative of the Constantinopolitan centre.⁴⁵ Yet, despite relatively insubstantial administrative connections, individuals and communities in such regions often displayed a striking knowledge about, interest in and ability to play the political games of Constantinople. Events and personalities at the centre of Byzantine politics frequently appear in local historiographical traditions, transmitted by literate as well as oral means. Historians working in Arabic, Armenian, Syriac, Slavonic and Latin on the periphery of Byzantium and beyond, all borrowed from Greek chronicles, even when they were hostile to the Byzantines themselves.⁴⁶ This historiographical evidence is interesting at two levels: first, it points to the fact that such local communities were already familiar with the written word, even if it was not Greek; and, second, they were able to respond to written Greek even if they came from non-Greek-speaking backgrounds. It is, of course, likely that the authors and audience for historiography on Byzantium's frontiers came principally from monastic or ecclesiastical milieux; but it is worth noting that literate practices in such regions were not merely confined to church-related contexts, nor were they new to the tenth and eleventh centuries. On the northern shores of the Black Sea, in southern Italy, in the Transcaucasus, in the Balkans and even in parts of early medieval Rus, there is evidence for communities with long-standing experience of the use of writing for practical record-making. Sometimes such traditions developed in the context of close engagement with metropolitan Byzantine culture, as in the case of the use of writing

for commercial purposes among the early Rus; but elsewhere written practices seem to have been more indigenous and self-generated.⁴⁷

A delineation of the evidence for literacy and its uses in the kaleidoscope of Byzantine provinces and frontier regions lies beyond the scope of this chapter. However, the degree to which the relationship between literacy and politics in the Constantinopolitan centre may have been shaped by established experiences of written culture in the provinces and on the frontiers is a topic worthy of further investigation. In this regard one fruitful area of study could be petitions. As the elite letters studied by Margaret Mullett suggest, lobbying for favour and protection in Byzantium was a complex and arduous process even for those with a great deal of power. However, it is clear from rural saints' lives, from the Athonite archives and from other literary sources that such complexity did not deter individuals and communities living in the provinces from active lobbying, if necessary in Constantinople itself. Their conduct and expectations were intimately tied to written culture. Petitions, for instance, could take the form of letters. Even when lobbying was conducted by personal delegations, what petitioners so desperately sought were favourable documents drawn up and authenticated by representatives of the imperial centre. This incentive is brought out very clearly by the life of St Luke of Phokis which describes representatives of his parents' village community journeying to Constantinople in search of *basilika grammata* (imperial letters) in order to resolve local disputes.⁴⁸ Of course, securing a response to a petition could be a long and tortuous task, but this in itself may be significant. As the empire expanded geographically in the tenth and eleventh centuries, those individuals and communities who saw the emperor in Constantinople as their ultimate protector grew in turn. It may have been the petitioning culture that developed alongside territorial expansion which gradually forced emperors into developing a bigger and more complex bureaucracy, especially in Constantinople itself. If this is so, then we may be wise to see the role of literacy in Byzantine government and politics as demand- rather than supply-led.

Such thoughts are of course speculative. However, if this demand-led model has any merit, it might point towards a particularly intriguing way in which the middle Byzantine empire exhibited parallels with its late antique predecessor. These parallels start with some contradictions that Chris Kelly has observed in the relationship between literacy, government and politics in the late antique empire. The most striking of these contradictions is the fact that despite the state's need for literate administrators to facilitate the collection of taxation and administration of justice over vast geographical areas, much of the extant written evidence connected to early Byzantine bureaucracy is curiously disorganized, unsystematic and inefficient. Rather than concluding that bureaucratic reality was simply failing to live up to imperial rhetoric, Kelly suggests that this mismatch was an essential and even deliberate component to autocracy. In other words, according to Kelly, emperors realized that they needed bureaucrats and the rule of law for functional imperial administration but they also wanted to avoid becoming too circumscribed by the personnel, practices and precedents that accompanied government by writing. Hence the mismatch between rhetoric and reality was a means by which emperors could carve out some personal space for the arbitrary actions that were needed to make the rest of the political community respect imperial authority.⁴⁹ Does this resolution have applications beyond late

antiquity? Could it make sense of some of the tensions visible in imperial attitudes to written government in medieval Byzantium, above all those expressed by strongarm emperors like Basil II? Of course, the allegations by Michael Psellos that Basil made up law as he went along and that he governed in an ad hoc manner with scant regard for men of learning prove on closer inspection to be erroneous. Basil did not dispense with government by writing. He himself issued two important novels, which we know from the *Peira*, a mid-eleventh-century collection of legal decisions, which continued to be enforced several decades after they were promulgated.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Basil's own court was far from a cultural desert. His most trusted servants included those with extensive education, literary interests and experience of written administration. The most significant of these figures was Nikephoros Ouranos, keeper of the imperial inkstand, diplomat, general, provincial governor, hagiographer, letter-writer and compiler of a vast military manual.⁵¹ And yet, could it be that in order to maintain some room for political manoeuvre and prevent entrapment within this bureaucratic network, Basil was determined to cultivate an alternative and exceptionally daunting image: that of the emperor for whom writing was of next to no importance?

NOTES

- 1 Lemerle 1971; Mango and Ševčenko 1975.
- 2 Stephenson 2000 (esp. chs 2–4); Neville 2004; Holmes 2005 (esp. chs 6–7).
- 3 Mullett and Scott 1981; Angelov 2007.
- 4 Browning 1978; Oikonomides 2005 (esp. papers III–VI); Holmes and Waring 2002; Mondrain 2006.
- 5 Heather 1994.
- 6 Franklin 2002b, esp. ch. 4.
- 7 Mullett 1990.
- 8 For this concept see Franklin 2002b: 3.
- 9 For the monastic foundations of Gregory Pakourianos, Eustathios Boilas and Michael Attaleiates see Lemerle 1970.
- 10 For a useful summary see Franklin 2002b: 133–5.
- 11 Theophanes Continuatus 1838: 446; Lemerle 1971, esp. ch. 10. See also Featherstone in this volume.
- 12 For scepticism see Ševčenko 1992.
- 13 Dain 1967. See also Sullivan in this volume.
- 14 McGeer 1995: 171–224; Dagron and Mihăescu 1986.
- 15 Ref. from Karagiorgou forthcoming.
- 16 Ref. from Roueché 2002: 117–23.
- 17 Impellizzeri and Ronchey 1984: I. 42–3.
- 18 See Bourbouhakis in this volume.
- 19 See plentiful examples in Skylitzes 1973: 132, 375, 393, 417–18, 422.
- 20 The Italian envoy Liudprand of Cremona gives a colourful account of the mid-tenth-century ceremonies in book 6 of his *Antapodosis* (Chiesa 1998: 149–50).
- 21 Skylitzes 1973: 483.
- 22 Dagron 2003a (esp. chs 2, 3 and 6); Featherstone in this volume.
- 23 McCormick 1986: 131–230.
- 24 Again Liudprand provides first-class evidence here (Chiesa 1998: 147–9, 195–6).
- 25 Shepard 2003: 91–115.
- 26 Cunningham 1991: 84–6, 94–6.
- 27 Constantine Porphyrogenitus 1967: 66–9.
- 28 For arguments about orthography as an index of literacy see papers III–VI in Oikonomides 2005; Jeffreys 2008; Waring 2002: 176–8.
- 29 See Papaioannou in this volume.

- 30 Mullett 1988.
- 31 On rebellions see in the first instance Cheynet 1990.
- 32 Numerous examples of the use of writing during revolt appear in John Skylitzes' testimony (Skylitzes 1973: 36, 179, 187, 190, 206, 209–10, 256, 279–81, 317, 327, 335–8, 366–7, 417–18, 428); on manifestoes see Shepard 1992 and Holmes 2005, ch. 5; on diplomatic implications see Canard 1949–50.
- 33 See e.g. imperial envoys sent with plenipotentiary powers during the revolt of Bardas Skleros in the early years of Basil II's reign (Skylitzes 1973: 316–20).
- 34 For written culture in provincial administration see Morris 1986.
- 35 Stephenson 2000: 17.
- 36 Frankopan 2001; Cheynet and Morrisson 1990.
- 37 Skylitzes 1973: 288, 355–6, 450–1, 457–8; McGeer 2003.
- 38 Lemerle 1970: 135–7, 154ff.
- 39 Litavrin 1972: 252–68; Lemerle 1960: 41–56.
- 40 Roueché 2002; Roueché 2003.
- 41 Lemerle 1970: 13–63; Vryonis 1957.
- 42 Trans. Vryonis 1957: 266.
- 43 Oikonomides 1976: 148–9; Nesbitt and Oikonomides 1991–2001.
- 44 Wolska-Conus 1976; Oikonomides 1976: 133–5.
- 45 See n. 2.
- 46 For material shared between Byzantine, Arabic and Armenian sources see Holmes 2006; for Greek historiography in Slavonic chronicles see Franklin 1990.
- 47 For the Rus see Franklin 2002a; for the relationship between writing and political culture on the northern shores of the Black Sea see Shepard 2006c.
- 48 Connor and Connor 1994: 6–8.
- 49 Kelly 1994; Kelly 2004: ch. 5.
- 50 Svoronos 1994: 184–232; Oikonomides 1986; Magdalino 1994: 105–6.
- 51 McGeer 1991; Crostini 1996.

CHAPTER TWELVE

BYZANTINE MILITARY MANUALS

Prescriptions, practice and pedagogy



Denis F. Sullivan

Byzantium for most of its existence was heavily dependent on the military for its survival. Throughout its long history the empire was threatened by various enemies, from the Huns, Persians, Avars and Slavs to the Arabs and the Turks. But like its predecessor the Roman empire, Byzantium lacked any military academy. The skills of generalship were often learned within aristocratic families whose patriarchs were military men. Military manuals afforded a more formal supplement to such learning, following in the tradition of earlier manuals written in Greek. The manuals pose a number of questions: to what extent did they repeat outdated practice taken from the tradition? How did the authors position themselves in relation to that tradition? What is the nature of their pedagogical approach? How were they read and used? My intent here is to provide a general survey of recent research on a selection¹ of these manuals with a more specific focus on the issues noted above.

The reasons for the prominence of military manuals in Byzantium have been described by Gilbert Dagron.² He argues that the success of the genre is primarily literary, heavily influenced by earlier such manuals. While containing some practical content, the manuals' primary function is to save the heritage of the past from oblivion and to present models. They presented war as a constant and regular feature of life, and the making of war as an art. The manuals were aimed less at practical application than at providing a moral grounding, as well as reflecting interests both aesthetic (the well-ordered arrangements seen in the diagrams of formations) and technical (the wondrous machines invented by military engineers). However, the individual manuals differ in the degree to which this characterization applies.

The earliest extant military manual in Greek is that of a certain Aenaeas, to whose name is added the epithet the Tactician based on the nature of his work, *On Siegework*, which is dated on internal evidence to the mid-fourth century BC. Among subsequent works with significant influence on Byzantine manuals are the *On Machines* of Athenaeus Mechanicus (first century AD) and the *Poliorketika* of Apollodorus of Damascus (second century AD), both dealing primarily with offensive siege machinery; Onasander's (first century AD) treatise *On Generalship*, which the author characterizes as a "training school for generals"; Aelian's *Taktika* (first to

second century AD) on the Hellenistic phalanx; and a *Taktika* attributed to a certain Asclepiodotus (second century AD).

This survey will begin with the *Epitedeuma* (“Invention”) of a certain Urbicius, dated to the reign of the emperor Anastasius (491–518). This short pamphlet offers what it calls a “formation” (*parataxis*) to protect infantry when fighting cavalry.³ The “formation” was actually some kind of fence-like physical barrier protecting a camp, which the author says was “not mentioned by the ancients, but has been invented by me,” thus setting himself against the tradition. He speaks with modesty (“I have been so bold” . . . “my frankness, I think, will be excused”) and sets his recommendations in the context of a campaign undertaken by “our gloriously triumphant and most pious lord,” at a time when veterans are old and the army dependent on new recruits. Urbicius indicates that he personally lacks military experience and that his “formation” is without empirical trial, but seeks acceptance, arguing that “Archimedes’ science will assist the armies,” and concludes that “a science that has languished since the death of Archimedes will be brought to completion.” He justifies the difficulty of implementing the device in terms of the security it provides, the value for morale and the inspiration of victory. Urbicius’ verbal description of the barrier was originally accompanied by an illustration which he introduces with the phrase “as the picture demonstrates.” The illustration is no longer extant and the verbal depiction alone leaves the precise nature of the device unclear: a useful demonstration of the pedagogical value of accompanying illustrations.⁴ As the numerous individual units of the barrier are said to be composed of three *kanones* (“poles” or “sticks”), it may be similar to the device described in the *Taktika* of Leo VI (XI: 26), where a camp barricade is constructed from multiple units, each unit composed of three *kanones*, two forming a lambda-shaped frame, the third with a sharp point projecting from the frame.⁵

The *Epitedeuma* provides a mix of usual and unusual features. The author addresses an emperor and relates his recommendations to a specific contemporary situation. He indicates openly that he is an “armchair strategist” and bases his expertise in science, comparing himself to Archimedes. He presents his work modestly, a topos of the genre. An illustration is an essential part of the work. He places overt emphasis on innovation and the need to go beyond the tradition provided by the “ancients,” although such emphasis suggests that innovation has difficulty in overcoming the force of tradition.

Perhaps the most influential manual is the *Strategikon* attributed to the emperor Maurice – an attribution still much debated – and dated to the late sixth or early seventh century.⁶ The text has a strong, though not exclusive, focus on cavalry, and considers such issues as organizational structures, tactics, equipment, strategy, ambushes, baggage trains, surprise attacks, drills, siege warfare and the nature of the enemy, particularly the Avars and Slavs. The author indicates that he writes to rectify the neglected state of the armed forces (a topos). He will do so in a simple style (another topos, but also here a reality), “drawing in part on ancient authors and in part on our limited experience of active duty”, with “no pretense . . . of trying to improve on the ancients,” but focusing on the basics to create “a modest elementary handbook or introduction for those devoting themselves to generalship.” In a concluding section following Book 11 (Book 12 was added later) the author repeats his comment about the mix of ancient authorities and personal

experience, but there adds that he writes his reflections “for the benefit of anyone who may read them.”

Despite the author’s comments, citation of earlier manuals is rare in his text, while his sources appear to be largely contemporary, for example official ordinances and disciplinary regulations.⁷ Citation of historical examples to illustrate or justify recommendations is also rare and laconic. The content of the work suggests that the intended audience was mid-level officers rather than practicing generals, although prescriptions are addressed on a number of occasions to “the general.” The author continues that not all topics have been covered, and that what has been written must be combined with experience and the circumstances to solve problems which arise in the future. The twelfth book focuses on infantry formations and drills. Diagrams, still extant at least in later manuscript versions, are an essential part of the text. Some are preceded by a list of the symbols which appear in them and introduced with statements such as “as the illustration makes clear.” Likewise prior to beginning his discussion of organizational structures, the author indicates that he will first provide verbal descriptions of the terms for officers, units and other soldiers, to facilitate comprehension of what follows. He occasionally uses a “straw man” (“Some people, overcautious and hesitant to change, might argue”) to set an argument. He also has dramatic flare: in recommending the value of drilling even in hot weather he concludes, “for no one knows what will happen.”

Syrianos, referred to by the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos (see below) in the phrase “historical books, above all Polyaeus and Syrianos,” has been the object of recent study and is now seen as the author of a comprehensive military treatise,⁸ most likely written in the middle of the ninth century.⁹ The text has been published as three separate works, the *De re strategica*¹⁰ and the *Rhetorica militaris*¹¹ (both previously considered anonymous), and a *Naumachiae*¹² attributed in the manuscript to a Syrianos Magister. There was also apparently a section on siege warfare no longer extant.

The beginning of the *De re strategica* is lost and the extant text begins with a general discussion of social structure and the functions of public officials. The author then indicates that he will turn to “the science of strategy, which is really the most important branch of the entire science of government.” He further indicates that given the dedication of the enemy “each person must stand up for his own country . . . with word, pen and deed,” a requirement to which the author will respond by writing, suggesting that he is an “armchair strategist.” This portion of his *Compendium* then deals with such topics as the qualifications of a general, sentinels, signal fires, forts, city construction, siege defense, tactics, the phalanx, armament, maneuvers, crossing rivers, encampment, the general’s staff, battle, night combat, ambushes, spies and archery, this last perhaps a later addition. The *Rhetorica militaris* begins: “This is what we had promised to tell as regards the operational part of all politics. As for the verbal part, it is divided into oral and written,” thus linking it to the *De re strategica* and introducing its new subject, military rhetoric. The author focuses specifically on a system for composing speeches with which a general might exhort his troops to battle, based on methods of argument drawn from the widely used rhetorical handbooks of Hermogenes, who is cited by name. He also includes sample speeches. Finally the *Naumachiae*, which has also lost its beginning, covers the following topics: landing on the enemy’s shore, the

admiral's staff, scout ships, signals used by scouts, battle formations and post-battle operations.

Syrianos includes definitions ("Strategy is the means by which a commander may defend his own lands and defeat the enemy") as essential to subsequent discussion, and to support recommendations he uses historical examples largely from ancient Greece and Rome (e.g. the Athenians at Marathon, Alexander the Great, Regulus, but also Belisarius). He employs no diagrams or illustrations, but does at one point recommend making sketches of dangerous terrain and locations suitable for ambush as encountered for possible later use. As Zuckerman has noted,¹³ land tactics shape the author's view of naval tactics, a highly unusual approach, perhaps indicating that these concepts are original in that area. Syrianos is also, however, often reliant on the earlier tradition of military manuals, as one might expect of an "armchair strategist." He draws verbatim from Aelian for descriptions of tactical formations, yet explicitly notes that he has omitted topics he considers outdated and added material not in his source.¹⁴ Yet his rejection of discussion of chariot and elephant tactics as obsolete may be paraphrasing a similar statement in Asclepiodotus.¹⁵ Similarly he openly notes that he is deliberately departing from Hermogenes in not constructing opposing arguments, since when a general exhorts to war, no consideration is given to the opposing point of view, and overtly criticizes Apollodorus' of Damascus method of crossing rivers by a lengthy critique of its practicality. He also describes the methods of predecessors (apparently Philo of Byzantium and Aeneas Tacticus) in combating sapper tortoises, but adds "We have discovered some things to add to their methods, which may prove even more effective against them," which he then describes.

Cosentino¹⁶ has plausibly argued that whatever the technical advice offered in the treatise, Syrianos' larger purpose, set in the context of the initial general discussion of social structure, is more literary and political than practical at the specifically military level, connecting contemporary Byzantium in the face of the Arab threat to its cultural inheritance from the Greco-Roman past, and hence asserting Byzantium's cultural superiority.

The *Taktika* of Leo VI ("The Wise") was written in approximately 905 by an emperor who never personally engaged in a military campaign.¹⁷ He calls his work "an introduction on tactics," presumably following Maurice's similar usage in the *Strategikon*, "for our lieutenant-generals" and refers to his own work more than once as a *Procheiros Nomos* (a lawbook). Each of the twenty chapters is called a *diataxis* ("Constitution").¹⁸ Thus Leo saw his work as addressed to generals and having the force of law, and he frequently directly addresses an unnamed general in the course of the work. The *Taktika* is comprehensive and covers (in the later Ambrosian recension): tactics and the general officer, characteristics of a good general, planning, army organization, weapons, armor, training, punishments, marching, baggage, encampment, preparation for battle, the day before the battle, battle, siegecraft, post-battle issues, surprise incursions, armies of different nations, naval warfare and various military maxims.

Leo indicates that the study of tactics and strategy has been neglected for some time, "not to say passed into complete oblivion," with negative consequences, an almost verbatim quotation from Maurice's *Strategikon*. He says that he has combed "the archaic and more recent strategic and tactical methods, and encountered the other histories sporadically and gathered anything at hand that

seemed useful . . . from there.” Much of the *Taktika* follows verbatim that of his imperial predecessor as well as the work of Onasander among others. In the first Constitution he indicates that at one time scythed chariots and elephants were a concern (a reference to Aelian’s *Taktika*), but he will not discuss what is now obsolete. This seeming break with the past, however, has been identified in the *De re strategica* of Syrianos and Asclepiodotus, so that even specific statements about relevance must be seen in the light of tradition.

Yet without question Leo was motivated by contemporary concerns. While he indicates that he derives his information from books, when addressing the area of naval warfare (Constitution XIX) he says, almost apologetically,¹⁹ that he was unable to find written sources and had to depend on information gathered from his naval officers. In his proemium he notes that he has compiled the book because of the Saracens, and in his Constitution XVIII on foreign peoples and their military (modeled on the similar ethnographic chapter in Maurice’s *Strategikon*) he includes a new section on the “Saracens who are now troubling our Roman state” and says: “This race borders our empire and, no less than the Persian race of old did to the ancient emperors, they now trouble us and harm our subjects daily, wherefore we have put forth the effort of this constitution on warfare”;²⁰ a similar statement appears in the epilogue. Notably the Arab navy was a particularly significant threat to Byzantium during this period. Dagron²¹ has suggested that Leo actually wished the Byzantines to emulate some aspects of the Arab system as a way of improving Byzantine success against them. It has also been suggested that while he does not describe the tactics of the Bulgarians, saying they are now at peace with the empire, he does describe those of the Magyars and notes their similarity to those of the Bulgarians, in a diplomatic subterfuge.²² Leo also describes the hand-held device for projecting Greek fire, the *cheirosiphon*, as “recently invented by our empire.” Thus while very much within the tradition and dependent on earlier sources, Leo’s *Taktika* still had contemporary relevance and initiated the resurgence of interest in military writing.

In this long work Leo uses a variety of approaches to presenting his recommendations over and above their legal force, particularly first-person plurals such as “we order,” “we ordain,” “we prescribe,” etc. There are no references to illustrations, and while examples are few, they are significant. To illustrate the value of offering lenient terms to a besieged enemy and of launching a counterinvasion when the enemy has invaded Byzantine territory, he cites the application of these approaches against Lombards and against the Arabs in Syria by “Our general, Nikephoros,” that is, Nikephoros Phokas the Elder, grandfather of the later emperor of the same name. Leo also mentions Phokas’ invention of a spiked device for protecting camps against Bulgarian cavalry. Leo’s examples, then, are contemporary and give prominence to a general whom Dagron has plausibly suggested was the principal informant of the emperor.²³ Finally worthy of note is that Leo recommends to his generals more than once that they consult books of history and strategy for information and also employ their own inventiveness (*epinoia*) and that of their military engineers.

The anonymous *De obsidione toleranda*,²⁴ written in its current form in the first quarter of the tenth century, though based on an earlier work, presents recommendations to an unnamed general on methods of defending a city under siege. The author initially encourages resistance when a siege threatens, considers provisioning of

necessities, evacuation of non-combatants, organization of craftsmen by category (e.g. arms makers, siege machine operators, bronze smiths, rope makers, *et al.*), fortification issues (e.g. repair and raising of walls, securing tunnels, extending defensive jetties, use of caltrops and warning bells), manpower issues (guard duty, deserters, training, organization, etc.) and final preparations (securing flocks, gathering in all crops, poisoning external water supplies, various tactics while under siege, etc.). Much of the terminology for professions, materials, weapons, etc. indicates a clearly contemporary perspective, including siphons to project Greek fire, and while a number of the defensive responses recommended are found in earlier manuals, there is little direct quotation other than in the examples. The author twice comments on the great inventiveness of the enemy and the need for a corresponding creative response to the immediate circumstances, twice also citing Archimedes as a model for such a response. The generic general to whom the treatise is directed is twice addressed in the vocative, suggesting that the author is a high-ranking officer himself.

There are no references to illustrations, but historical examples are frequently used to support a recommendation, either positively (e.g. “For when Vespasian encircled Jotapata Josephus by deploying wicker barriers extended the wall to a great height”) or negatively to show the consequences of failing to follow the recommendation (“For great Caesarea is said to have been taken through the tunnels”). In one instance the author explains that he uses examples as encouragement to show that contemporary enemies are weaker than those faced successfully in past history. Most examples are drawn from Polybius, Josephus, Arrian and Procopius and in one case, reflecting apparent early seventh-century events, from an unknown source. The author also mentions as examples of enemy methods those of Bulgarians and Arabs (a siege of Thessalonika, presumably that of 903) in contexts which suggest recent activity.

Two anonymous treatises on siege machines are attributed to a “Heron of Byzantium,” though actually the author is anonymous: the *Parangelmata Poliorketika* (*Instructions for Siege Warfare*) and *Geodesia* (*Measurement*).²⁵ Both may be dated in the second quarter of the tenth century. In the first the author indicates that he will update the treatise of Apollodorus of Damascus (first to second century AD) by modernizing the technical terminology and providing his own new approach to illustration, by providing in effect an illustration of the “finished product” to make construction easy for anyone. He includes in his work various tortoises, rams, observation ladders, mobile wooden towers, ladders and other devices for mounting walls, and rafts for crossing rivers. Most are taken from Apollodorus and Athenaeus Mechanicus and updated as indicated, some are presumably fanciful (an inflatable leather ladder based on Philo Mechanicus) and some are of purely historical interest (the famous ram tortoise of Hegetor). Others reflect contemporary practice such as his description of a very light portable siege shed called a *laisa* made by plaiting vine branches in the form of an arch.

The *Geodesia* draws heavily on a treatise of Heron of Alexandria, the *Dioptra*, and examines methods of safely measuring the required size of the various devices. Notably the author uses locations in the hippodrome of Constantinople, for example the distance across the starting gates, to teach the use of his mathematical formulae, asserting the pedagogical value of such an approach with the maxim “They learn

pottery on the pot.” The treatise is richly illustrated with depictions of finished devices and of the mathematical formulae, including a human figure measuring the radius of a circle and a known cistern used for a formula of measurement of the volume of a rectangle. The author comments: “an illustration alone, if well defined, is able to render quite clear aspects of construction that are obscure and difficult to express” and links each illustration to the text with such statements as, “The drawings are below in sequence.” He concludes the *Parangelmata Poliorketika* with the statement that if the military commanders make accurate use of his manual “they will easily capture cities, especially those of Hagar, and themselves suffer nothing fatal from the God-damned (*theolestos*) enemy.” Thus the treatise was inspired by offensive siege warfare against the Arabs, and as the Greek for “God-damned” is particularly associated with the Arabs of Crete, may be related to the expedition against Crete in 949. The practical utility of the treatise, however, has been called into question. The author’s display of rhetorical conventions and Neoplatonic philosophy, as well as use of high-style Greek, has been seen as an indication that the manuals were less for immediate use by military engineers than “as part of a debate within the imperial court about how the past was to be used in a military context.”²⁶

The anonymous *Sylloge tacticorum* (*Collection of Tactics*)²⁷ is of uncertain date, but most likely mid-tenth century; the *Taktika* of Leo VI is one its sources, as are a number of earlier texts on generalship, tactics and stratagems, for example Onasander, Aelian and Polyaeus; some chapters influenced the later *Praecepta militaria* of Nikephoros Phokas. While much is derived from the earlier manuals, including discussions of generalship, measurements, encampments and stratagems, the author specifically states in his introductory paragraph that it is necessary to speak of military tactics not only of prior times but also of “our times” so that his readers will know what was done by the ancients, but also what was discovered by their posterity, thereby increasing the effectiveness of his work. He indeed does treat contemporary subjects (particularly equipment and cavalry tactics) in considerable detail in chapters 38–9 and 46–7.²⁸ The text twice refers to illustrations with the comment that these will provide greater clarity than the text; the illustrations, however, do not survive.

The author employs an interesting range of vocabulary found for the first time, for example *artzikidion* (an unknown species of a tree essential for single-piece spears) and *kompothelukion* (“button” for securing caftan sleeves), as well as combined phrases (*kabadia meta bambakes kai koukouliou*, or “caftans of cotton and coarse silk”) for contemporary military equipment. Noteworthy as well is the first recorded use of the term *saka* to designate a “rearguard,” a term which occurs subsequently in all the manuals of the later tenth century. Arabic in origin, it suggests Byzantine adaptation to Arab practice.²⁹ It contains also the first mention of the *menavlatoi*, infantry soldiers armed with a new type of heavy spear, and the first technical use of the word *mosun* for a mobile siege tower, a usage subsequently found in the *Alexiad* of Anna Komnene. The “hand-siphon” for projecting Greek fire, the author says, “our empire has now invented,” apparently recalling the similar statement in Leo VI’s *Taktika*.

Three short treatises, edited and translated under the title *Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*,³⁰ are associated with the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, and dated in their current form to the late 950s, although they are

based in part on material compiled by Leo Katakylas in the early tenth century at the direction of Leo VI. The texts provide detailed information on the process needed when an emperor campaigns in Asia Minor. The first provides a list of camps on route. The second (presumably written by Katakylas) records the organizational aspects of an imperial expedition; in the last, an expansion of the second, Constantine says he personally compiled the material as a guide and memorandum for his son Romanos II, whom he addresses directly. This third details equipment, supplies, pack animals, tents, etc. needed for the emperor and his entourage, as well as the elaborate procedure for welcoming him back to Constantinople. Of particular interest are the security measures employed both in camp and on the march, and the mention of books to be included in the emperor's personal baggage: "military manuals (*strategika*), books on mechanics including siege machines (*helepoleis*) and production of missiles (*belopoiika*); and historical books, especially those of Polyainos and Syrianos. The latter reference is to the aforementioned *Compendium* of Syrianos, the former to the second-century *Strategems* of Polyaeus, whose popularity in Byzantium is attested by its frequent abridgement in extant manuscripts. There are no accompanying illustrations.

The second half of the tenth century provides three manuals closely associated with the emperor Nikephoros Phokas, a scion of an aristocratic family from Cappadocia known for extensive military experience. His grandfather had successfully commanded troops in Asia Minor and Sicily, as noted above; his uncle Leo was defeated at Achelous in 917 by the Bulgars; his father Bardas and brother Leo were also general officers. Nikephoros became supreme commander in 955 and led the Byzantine offensive in northern Syria; in 961 after a siege he took Crete back from the Arabs. He was declared emperor by the army in 963.

The *Praecepta militaria*³¹ may be from the hand of Nikephoros Phokas himself as argued by the recent editor of the text,³² although the view has not gained universal agreement.³³ The text, written about 965, provides pragmatic recommendations for commanders of Byzantine offensive operations in northern Syria and mentions as the enemy the Arabs and the Bedouins. The latter are specifically characterized as "confident in their horses" whose speed allows them to avoid pursuers and then suddenly turn and reverse the situation. The treatise, which lacks any formal introduction and may be incomplete, is in five chapters dealing with infantry, heavy infantry, heavily armored cavalry, deployment of cavalry, and encampment and spies. Colloquial terms occur, generally with an apologetic tone. For example, the word *alogopturma* ("stampede") is introduced with the phrase "as it is called in colloquial speech." The main contemporary developments include the descriptions of the *menavlatoi*, infantry armed with a heavy spear (*menavlion*) to withstand cavalry charges, the newly designed "hollow infantry square" and the use of heavily armored cavalry (*kataphraktoi*), a development particularly associated with Nikephoros Phokas.

Highly detailed information on the components of weapons and armor is provided, from cotton or coarse silk body armor to the fastenings used to secure sleeves as needed. Among the weapons mentioned is the hand-held device for propelling "Greek fire," recommended for breaking enemy formations of greater or equal strength. The author recommends avoiding a pitched battle with an enemy of greater or equal numbers, and instead using stratagems and ambushes. Worth noting is the

emphasis on the psychological element. On two occasions the text indicates that military units should be composed of men linked by kinship and friendship, presumably to increase unit cohesion and readiness to fight and to assist in the identification of spies in the encampment, as they will stand out as outsiders. While other manuals mention the aid of God, and Maurice's *Strategikon* mentions specific prayers, the religious element here is exceptionally strong. As the enemy draws near every man is to pray the "invincible prayer proper to Christians," and the exact text of the prayer is provided. The subsequent advance is to be undertaken calmly and without commotion or sound. Two additional prayer texts follow. When the army is encamped all the men are to observe Vespers and Matins scrupulously, repeating the *Kyrie Eleeson* as many as 100 times devoutly and tearfully. Anyone found failing to do so is to be demoted in rank and publicly humiliated.

The relation of the *Praecepta* to the tradition is complex. The author employs only one overt reference in noting that the Macedonian phalanx, sixteen, twelve or ten men deep, was appropriate when the enemy used elephants and wild beasts, as did the Ethiopians against Alexander the Great, but is no longer so and that even the Arab enemy have greatly reduced the depth of their formations. This example, of unknown origin, justifies the recommendation of contemporary formations seven men deep. Other possible references to concepts found in Homer, Plato and Onasander, noted by McGeer,³⁴ may be military topoi. Without question the author made significant use, with adjustments, of chapters of the *Sylloge tacticorum*. There are no illustrations, although McGeer has shown that the author was aware of the short pamphlet called the *Syntaxis armatorum quadrata* which includes a detailed diagram of the new infantry square, and the spare presentation, pedestrian style and narrow focus suggest a highly pragmatic purpose.³⁵

The treatise best known under the Latin title *De velitatione* (translated as *Skirmishing*³⁶ or as *Le traité sur la guérilla*³⁷) begins with the most extensive and personal preface of all the manuals, yet still leaves unclear the identity of the author. The writer indicates that he has served as a commander on both eastern and western fronts and that the method he will describe was perfected by Bardas Phokas, from whom he learned it; he has also used the method himself in the field. He says that he has made the method "a part of himself" and also indicates that he was told to commit the material to writing by Nikephoros Phokas. He does so with the comment that the method is not useful in the immediate situation because God has cut down the sons of Ishmael (the Arabs), but should be preserved should the need arise in the future.

The author says that he "won't hesitate to record what he has observed" but also refers readers to Leo's *Taktika* and twice to earlier "books on strategy and tactics." He writes for a general, whom he addresses a number of times in the vocative. The enemy is referred to on a number of occasions as the "men of Tarsus" or the "emir's formation," as well as "the sons of Hagar." The author sets the scene specifically, mentioning mountain passes in Seleukia and the theme of Anatolikon, the Taurus mountains, Germanikeia and Adata, regions beyond the Euphrates, etc. He uses only a few, but noteworthy examples. The recommendation to occupy narrow defiles and attack a retiring (and hence tired and burdened) enemy is exemplified by three defeats of Ali, son of Hamdan (two of these commanded by Leo Phokas, though he is not mentioned by name), said to be known to everyone. The recommendation to

invade enemy territory when the enemy has invaded that of the Byzantines is supported by reference to Leo VI's *Taktika* and to the example of the actions of Nikephoros Phokas the Elder against the Cilician Arabs (noted above), although there is considerably more detail here. The two examples offer further evidence for the author's relationship to the Phokas family. On five occasions the author uses the term *saka* to describe enemy cavalry units. He expresses typical Byzantine distrust of Armenians in the Byzantine army, particularly on their reliability as sentries.

The focus, then, is on the eastern frontier with an emphasis on "shadowing" (*paramone*) the enemy from positions on higher ground and on using such signs as smoke, clouds of dust, tracks and the trampling down of the grass to find and follow the enemy and to estimate their numbers. Specific types of enemy incursions are described (small forays of cavalry, larger attacks with both cavalry and infantry, and full-scale expeditions) and the nature of the best response to each (reconnaissance, early warning, ambushes, use of narrow mountain passes). The text includes an emotional plea for bolstering morale through regular payment of salaries and exemption of land taxes for soldiers. He indicates that the general using his work must employ the recommendations flexibly in response to specific circumstances. The whole conveys the impression of a field officer with extensive experience and a strong belief in the preservation and transmission of hard-won knowledge.

The treatise *De re militari*,³⁸ also known as the *Anonymous Vari* after an early editor, can be dated after 970 based on internal evidence. While the author mentions twice the "Arabs and Turks" (i.e. Magyars) as the enemy, and twice operations in the land of the Hagarenes (Arabs), the primary focus is on the north-west frontier and Bulgaria, and the treatise was perhaps written "to complement the *De velitatione*."³⁹ The author's directly self-referential indications are few, but his comment "Experience has taught us about passing through the mountains and going along unfamiliar roads" indicates personal experience, as does his presentation. He places a strong emphasis on applications of arithmetic, such as determining the circumference of a camp based on the size of the army to stationing individual soldiers a meter apart within the camp. He is writing of a campaign being led by the emperor and directs his recommendations to both a general and to the emperor. It has been suggested plausibly, but not with certainty, that the emperor in question may be the young Basil II.⁴⁰

The topics include encampment in enemy territory, distribution of troops within the camp, watches, dual camps in constricted terrain, size of cavalry units, breaking camp safely, marching in enemy territory, best reactions to attacks on the camp and on the marching formation, water supplies, fording rivers, avoiding unnecessary baggage and people, armament, guides and scouts, mountain passes, siege warfare, training, muster rolls and daily duties. Among the details are the use of caltrops, of concealed pits with sharpened wooden stakes in them and of warning bells as part of camp defenses, and the logistical necessity of supplying the field army from the homeland, for example providing barley (the army itself can carry only a twenty-four-day supply) to an army in Bulgaria where "there is a total lack of necessities." He indicates that assignments for the following day are to be provided in writing to the men who will be sent out.

On two occasions the author refers the reader to earlier literature. In recommending against ostentatious displays of gold and silver armor he indicates that "history books" show that the Greeks and Romans were "extremely plain in their

... equipment and weapons,” but nonetheless victorious. In briefly listing siege machines he says that “in the books of the ancients” one will find this material in a fuller and more strategic fashion, and hence he has personally refrained from going into detail. His occasional examples are virtually all generic, “as was customary for the ancients,” “many armies have been destroyed by attacks of that kind at night,” “from ancient times commanders have made this clear” and perhaps most interesting “as it seemed best to the ancients and as our experience has proven to us.” The treatise preserves a series of illustrations of the encampment, one introduced in an interesting fashion. In describing details of the camp arrangement, the author comments “as the diagrammed narrative (*diagraphheisa historia*) presents more accurately and more clearly,” and later comments “as the diagram (*diagramma*) of the camp makes clear.”

The *Taktika* of Nikephoros Ouranos may be seen as the culmination of the interest in military science so prominent in the tenth century.⁴¹ This massive treatise, which has not been completely edited, is heavily dependent on the *Taktika* of Leo VI, the *Praecepta militaria*, the *De re militari* and classical tacticians, and has also been characterized as the “final product in the encyclopaedist movement in tenth-century Byzantium.”⁴² The author in this case is known from other sources, including his own writings. Ouranos served as an emissary to Baghdad for the emperor Basil II in the 980s, led the Byzantine army that defeated the Bulgarians at the Spercheios river in 997 and was appointed governor of Antioch beginning in 999. The composition of the *Taktika* has been dated to this period. In the absence of a full edition and the general dependence of the published portions of the text on the *Praecepta militaria* and *De re militari*, detailed analysis is not feasible. The paraphrases reflect some changes in vocabulary to more contemporary terms, occasional elaborations for clarity and direct addresses to a general. McGeer has observed that while Ouranos closely follows the tactics set forth in the *Praecepta*, indicating their continued relevance, he also included one significant change in infantry tactics (a new maneuver for reinforcing the front lines), showing his interest in matters of contemporary relevance.⁴³ McGeer has also noted that chapters 63–5 contain material which goes beyond the *Praecepta* and has argued cogently that in chapters 56–65 Ouranos was creating a kind of *Praecepta militaria continuata*, with minor modifications to battle tactics, and new material in chapters 63–5 to reflect new realities on the eastern frontier, namely the necessity of maintaining control of territory previously conquered in that area.⁴⁴ These new sections cover offensive raiding tactics, breaking camp and siege warfare, and include extensive descriptions of a siege shelter, new in the tenth century, termed *laisa*, mentioned also by the so-called “Heron of Byzantium.” Ouranos also provides instructions for a sapping operation, with detailed information on tunneling from a distance to the wall and on how to prop the roof of the tunnel to avoid collapse. Twice in this section he refers to the various devices employed by “the ancients” and asserts that his generation has tried many of these and concluded that a sapping operation is the most effective. This assertion based on empirical trial is one of the clearest in the manuals of an overt recommendation of contemporary practice against ancient. Ouranos presses his point in the concluding section of the chapter by indicating that while the ancients contrived many methods for conducting siege warfare, “I have set down only the methods that our generation currently

employs,” referring “those eager to learn” to tactical treatises for what he has omitted.

The Byzantine military manuals resist easy summarization. They are often prescriptive in nature,⁴⁵ and frequently put their prescriptions in the form “it is necessary to do such and such,” although descriptions of both contemporary and earlier practice are also found. In many cases the prescriptions are reinforced by examples, often traditional, but sometimes contemporary. Those written by experienced military men for the most part have a more pragmatic character than those of “armchair strategists” whose works show greater reliance on the earlier tradition. In many cases diagrams and illustrations are presented as necessary to clarify the written text, most notably in the new approach of “Heron of Byzantium,” while in others they are completely absent. Even in the most traditional ones, contemporary issues and methods are presented. When these occur the authors are often apologetic about going beyond the received tradition, but in some cases firmly unapologetic. Notable also is the frequent insistence that the commander must use the prescriptions flexibly in light of actual circumstances. While perhaps a *topos*, the inherent cogency of the recommendation and its presence in practical as well as more literary texts suggests its aptness.

In his discussion of “Military Literature and the Profession of Arms,” McGeer has situated the manuals in relation to military exercises in training situations and to the inclusion of the sons of aristocrats and emperors as observers on military campaigns.⁴⁶ He notes with valuable examples the various uses to which the manuals were put in the tenth and eleventh centuries, from providing “intellectual cachet” in mastery of ancient theory and vocabulary as well as models of proper military conduct, to practical application for both prospective and active commanders. One such example, a comment from Psellos’ *Chronographia* that the emperor Basil II derived battle formations “some from handbooks . . . others by virtue of his own experience in reaction to the circumstances,” provides useful evidence for flexible implementation of prescriptions. Actual procedures followed by another emperor suggest a clearly intellectual approach to warfare: Herakleios, while away from Constantinople, is said to have written a letter detailing prescriptive measures to be taken in preparation for a siege defense, sketched battle plans and devised diagrams for siege machines; his battlefield tactics suggest a knowledge of Maurice’s *Strategikon*.⁴⁷ The manuals then might best be seen as multi-purposed in intent as well as in application.

NOTES

- 1 For more extensive surveys of the genre see Dain 1967; and Hunger 1978: II, 323–40 on “Kriegswissenschaft.” See also the articles on *strategika* and on the individual manuals in *ODB*.
- 2 Dagron and Mihăescu 1986: 139–41.
- 3 Greatrex *et al.* 2005. I follow the published translations of the editions throughout unless otherwise noted or where no English translation exists.
- 4 Greatrex *et al.* 2005.
- 5 McGeer 1991: 134–5.
- 6 Dennis 1981; Dennis 1984; Rance (forthcoming).
- 7 Rance 2004: 268.
- 8 Zuckerman 1990.

- 9 Cosentino 2000.
- 10 Dennis 1985: 1–141.
- 11 Köchly 1856.
- 12 Pryor and Jeffreys 2006: 453–81.
- 13 Zuckerman 1990: 212–15
- 14 Zuckerman 1990: 215–16.
- 15 See Baldwin 1988, who allows the possibility that Syrianos is reproducing Asclepiodotus here, although noting that the Byzantines faced enemies with elephants in the sixth century and suggesting that the statement is evidence for a later date for the *De re strategika*. Zuckerman 1990: 217, followed by Cosentino 2000: 265, argues that Aelian was Syrianos’ sole source for this material and that he had not read Asclepiodotus.
- 16 Cosentino 2000: 279–80.
- 17 In PG 107: cols 671–1094. A new edition with English translation is in preparation by G. Dennis for publication by Dumbarton Oaks.
- 18 See Magdalino 1998.
- 19 Dagron and Mihăescu 1986: 140.
- 20 Koliaş 1984: 130.
- 21 Dagron and Mihăescu 1986.
- 22 Tougher 1997b: 181–2.
- 23 Dagron and Mihăescu 1986: 166.
- 24 Sullivan 2003.
- 25 Sullivan 2000.
- 26 Holmes 2001: 480.
- 27 Dain 1938.
- 28 McGeer 1995: 184.
- 29 McGeer 1995: 283–4.
- 30 Haldon 1990.
- 31 McGeer 1995: 3–78.
- 32 McGeer 1995: 172–81.
- 33 Cheynet 1997.
- 34 McGeer 1995: 183.
- 35 McGeer 1995: 258–9.
- 36 Dennis 1985: 144–239.
- 37 Dagron and Mihăescu 1986.
- 38 Dennis 1985: 246–335.
- 39 McGeer in *ODB*: II, 612.
- 40 Dennis 1985: 242–3.
- 41 McGeer 1995: 66–167; McGeer 1991: 129.
- 42 Trombley 2006: 261.
- 43 McGeer 1991: 132.
- 44 McGeer 1991: 133–4.
- 45 Sullivan 1997.
- 46 McGeer 1995: 191–5.
- 47 Kaegi 2003: 135 and 115–17.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DE CERIMONIIS AND THE GREAT PALACE*



J. M. Featherstone

One of the most important sources for Byzantine studies is the text commonly known as the *De cerimoniis*. This compilation, associated with the name of Constantine VII, is a great mine of information not only for philologists, but also for political, cultural and art historians, as well as archaeologists. The keenly anti-quarian Constantine initiated this collection in the context of a renewal of court ceremonial on his accession to self-rule in 945. Here old descriptions of ceremonies were gathered together and new ones added. A subsequent redaction, with various additions, was produced some twenty years later, during the reign of the emperor Nikephoros Phokas (963–9). The text of this later version has come down to us in two contemporary manuscripts, one almost intact, now in Leipzig, and another which is preserved in two palimpsest fragments, in Istanbul and on Mt Athos.¹

Regarding the purpose of his compilation, Constantine speaks of the need to restore order to imperial ceremonies, long fallen into confusion. Thereby is the power of the ruler once again to be revealed in its harmony to the subjects of the empire. Political interest clearly stood in the foreground: the significance of the emperor must be represented in magisterial wise; and the imperial court as well as the population of the empire must follow the proper order so that they might thus both honour the emperor and display the glory of the empire to other nations.²

In some parts of the *De cerimoniis* we find this idealized form where stress is placed on the strict order of ceremonies; but in others, reports of particular occasions have been inserted which show us imperial court ceremonial in practice. The reception of Arab envoys from Tarsus in the year 946 is a good example. As we shall see below, various ceremonies and feasts were here jumbled together: from each were taken the most striking costumes, artworks and formations, making use also of the most impressive buildings of the palace – all this with blithe disregard for the original order or significance of the various elements.

However this may be, speaking symbolically in his preface Constantine proclaims that his collected descriptions of imperial ceremonies will shine to the splendour of the imperial office like a bright mirror set forth in the midst of the palace.³ Constantine's image rightly places the ceremonies he describes in the context of the Great Palace of Constantinople in which they had evolved over the centuries. But for

us there are two problems here. First, though we can more or less trace the confines of this palace on the map of modern Istanbul, all of its many structures and spatial elements have long vanished and can only be hypothetically reconstructed on the basis of written sources, of which the *De cerimoniis* is the most important.⁴ And this brings us to the second problem: that the *De cerimoniis* is, to use the term applied by Cyril Mango to Byzantine texts in general, a distorting mirror.⁵

To begin, let us ask what Constantine VII means exactly by the word “palace,” in Greek τὸ παλάτιον. The *De cerimoniis* contains various texts dating from the sixth to the tenth century and reflecting the Great Palace in the respective periods of its history. In the sixth-century chapters excerpted from Peter the Patrician we get a glimpse of the old Constantinian palace on the upper terrace beside the hippodrome with which court ceremonial was still very closely bound at the period.⁶ But in another text, the *Kletorologion* or *Banquet Book* of Philotheos, dated to 899,⁷ we observe that the old buildings on the upper terrace were now only used on special occasions. The everyday life of the emperors and court had shifted to the newer buildings on the lower terrace beside the Sea of Marmara, with the emperor’s *Koiton* or private apartments and the adjacent Chrysotriklinos as its nucleus.⁸ Indeed, in Philotheos and in all the chapters of the *De cerimoniis* dating from later periods, the term “palace,” sometimes with the epithets “God-guarded” or “sacred” – because the emperor’s person was considered sacred – is restricted to the complex around the Chrysotriklinos (Figure 13.1).⁹ Whereas in Peter the Patrician τὸ παλάτιον comprises all the buildings on the upper terrace,¹⁰ in the tenth-century texts the emperor is always said to leave the palace when he goes from the lower terrace to one or another of the older buildings on the upper terrace for some special ceremony or when he passes through them in procession to St Sophia on feast-days. Similarly, imperial officials on their way to daily functions are able to traverse the upper terrace freely, but they must await the opening of the precinct of the palace on the lower terrace at precise times.

Thus, such famous buildings of the old palace as the Chalke Gate, the Consistorium, the Great Triklinos of the Nineteen Couches, the Augusteus and even the Kathisma, or imperial loge, overlooking the hippodrome, were no longer considered parts of the imperial residence.¹¹ Like the adjacent Magnaura, the former Senate house on the Augustaion which was still used for grand occasions of state, the ancient structures on the upper terrace – now some 600 years old – were maintained, in a dubious state of preservation, as a sort of museum. Of course, though less carefully guarded than the actual palace, the whole area of these old buildings remained inaccessible to the general populace of Constantinople at least until the Fourth Crusade.¹² But just how difficult it had become by the tenth century to maintain and defend this white elephant, and how unnecessary it was to everyday court life, is shown by the construction under the emperor Nikephoros Phokas in 969 – only a few years after the compilation of the *De cerimoniis* – of walls running from the hippodrome to the Sea of Marmara which cut off the palace on the lower terrace from the older buildings on the upper terrace and destroyed not a few of them.¹³ It was under this same Nikephoros that the Byzantines reconquered Antioch after 300 years, and if the imperial administration had deemed the old palace indispensable, there would surely have been the resources to maintain it for at least another century.

Nevertheless, the earlier maintenance and ceremonial use – however occasional – of the structures of the old palace is of great significance. They were preserved for

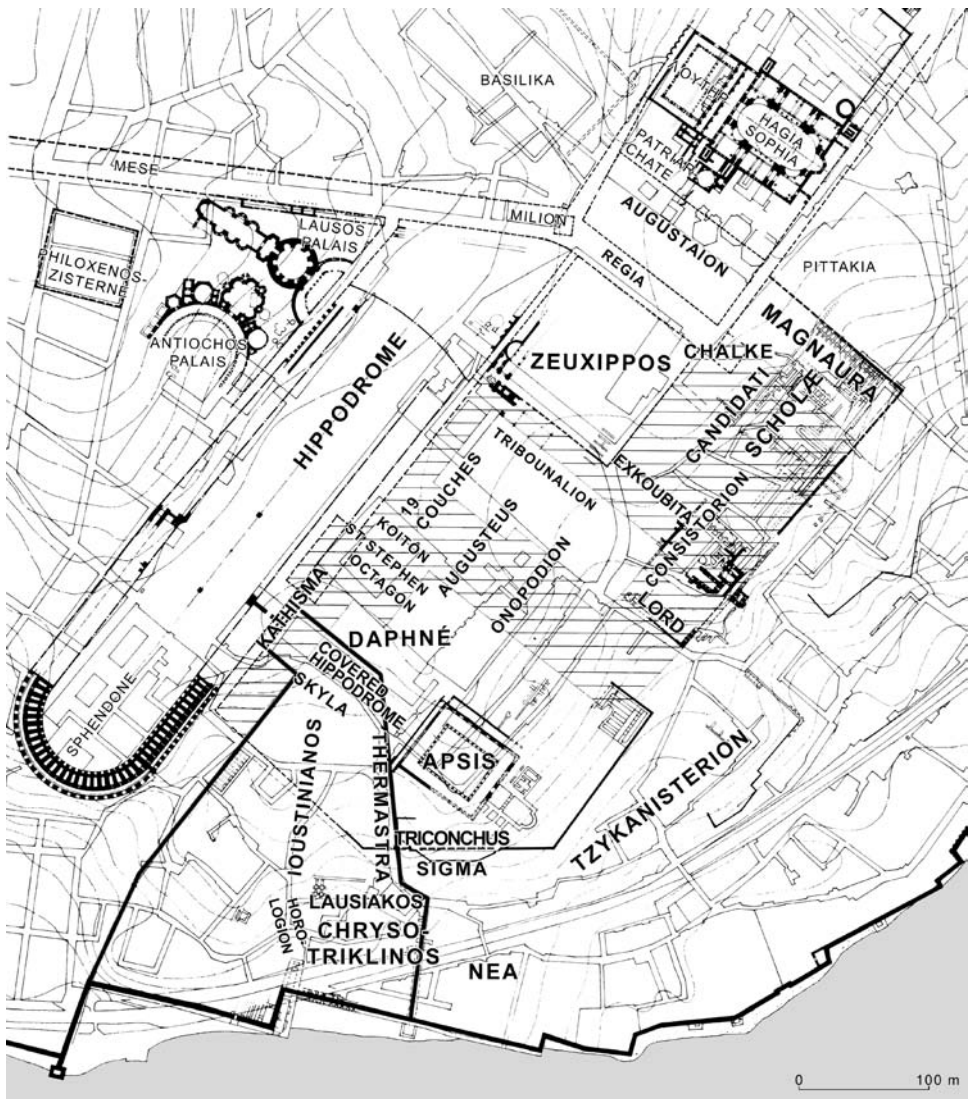


Figure 13.1 The Great Palace, redrawn by J. M. Featherstone from Müller-Wiener 1977.

many centuries in order, as it were, to impart the glory of the past to the image of the reigning emperor and the state. This antiquarian tendency is reflected in the composition of the *De cerimoniis*. Filled with descriptions of ceremonies performed in the old buildings, it tells us frustratingly little about current ritual in the actual palace or the newer buildings on the lower terrace. Such famous structures as the Sigma-Triconchus exedra where, as we know from other sources, the emperor Theophilos (829–42) preferred to spend as much time as possible, or the Nea church built by Constantine VII's own grandfather Basil I (867–86), are described only in passing.¹⁴ But we must not let this antiquarianism obscure our view of the real state of things. By the tenth century the very names of the buildings of the old palace had gone out of

common use. In a passage added to the *De cerimoniis* by a later redactor in the 960s concerning a reception for Arab envoys from Tarsus in 946, the Consistorium, the famed aula regia of the Constantinian palace, is repeatedly referred to as the “hall where the canopy stands and the magistroi are promoted,” as if that was all that was known about it.¹⁵ Moreover, we note here that the Consistorium and all the other buildings of the old palace through which the foreign guests were paraded were hung with silken cloths and curtains from the Chrysotriklinos and chandeliers from the Nea church. The fact is that the old buildings no longer had their own decorations or lighting, and we ask ourselves whether the many silken and embroidered cloths hung everywhere, some of them blocking off entire ways of passage, were not intended to hide the state of disrepair of these structures.¹⁶

We shall return to the buildings of the old palace later, but let us now look at what the *De cerimoniis* tells us about the everyday ritual in the palace proper in the tenth century. Central to this ritual was the Chrysotriklinos. Built or at least reconstructed by the emperor Justin II (565–78) at the end of the sixth century, this octagonal hall was the interface between the private apartments of the emperor, the Koiton, and the public parts of the palace. In *De cerimoniis* we see the Chrysotriklinos as a throne room, not for grand audiences of state as in the Magnaura with its phantasmagoric throne of Solomon,¹⁷ but for other functions such as the promotion of imperial officials, banquets and, especially, the so-called “everyday procession” when officials assembled in the adjoining halls of the Lausiakos and Ioustinianos to await possible summons by the emperor. The Chrysotriklinos is often compared with octagonal halls which have been found in positions of articulation between private apartments in other late antique palaces: in Constantinople beside the old Koiton on the courtyard of the Daphne on the upper terrace, in the Lateran in Rome (later converted into the “Baptistery of Constantine”), at Gamzigrad and elsewhere.¹⁸ Rather than look for some ideological significance, I would suggest, quite simply, that an octagonal space lent itself very well to a system of side chambers and curtains whereby the coming and going of the sovereign from his private apartments and his appearance to his subjects could be invested with the appropriate solemnity.

From the descriptions in the *De cerimoniis* it is clear that the Chrysotriklinos consisted of eight vaulted elements (καμάραι) opening onto a central space. The element on the eastern side is more precisely called a κόγχη, or apse, whereas the other seven sides are always referred to as καμάραι or βῆλα, that is, curtains, by which they were shut off from the central space. There were sixteen window vaults in a central dome, and also small windows glazed with alabaster set high up in the side vaults, whose light would have passed into the central space through openings, presumably arches, above the curtains which shut off the side vaults at floor level.¹⁹ Unlike the churches of SS Sergius and Bacchus, St Vitale in Ravenna and the Palatine Chapel in Aix, which present a similar configuration of interconnecting side galleries, the Chrysotriklinos was not a free-standing building. There were no proper windows in its side galleries but only doors opening into adjacent structures. As illustrations we reproduce the reconstruction by Ebersolt (Figure 13.2) and offer a sketch plan of the Chrysotriklinos and the surrounding buildings (Figure 13.3).

The orientation of the apse to the East is not the only element of the Chrysotriklinos suggestive of an ecclesiastical structure. This apse contained an image of Christ – probably a mosaic – under which, as we shall see, the emperor or co-emperors sat to

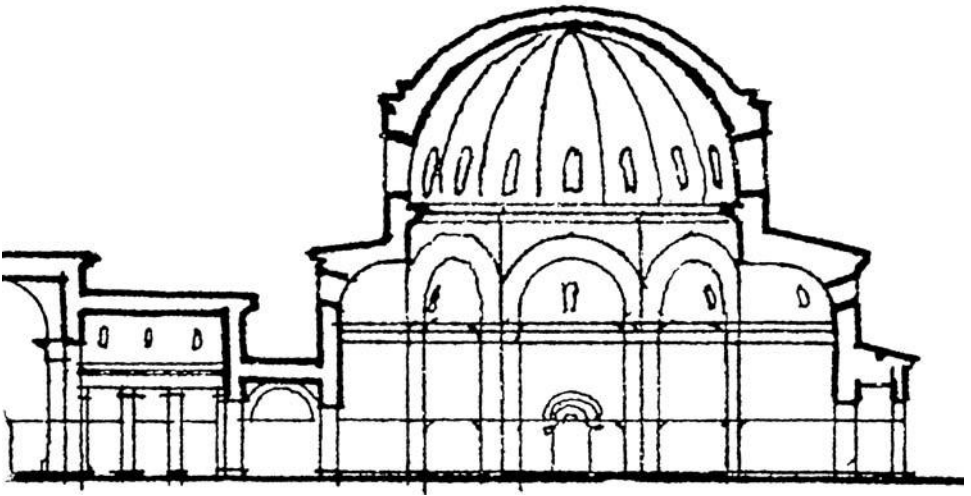


Figure 13.2 The Chrysotriklinos, after Ebersolt 1910, folding plain.

receive the veneration of subjects and guests.²⁰ The main entrance was on the western side, with an outside porch called the Tripeton, in which there was a clock, or sundial. The Tripeton gave on to a terrace on which were also the entrances to the halls of the Lausiakos and Ioustinianos.

As we have said, all the side vaults except the eastern apse were shut off from the central space of the Chrysotriklinos by curtains. The curtains on the western side could be drawn back in the middle, and it was through them that one was admitted into the Chrysotriklinos for an audience with the emperor sitting opposite in the eastern apse. On other occasions when the emperor was not sitting on the throne, imperial officials and guests could walk straight through the Chrysotriklinos, going in the western doors and out other doors on the eastern side, evidently in the eastern apse, which gave on to a terrace. These doors, like those of the western entrance, were of silver.²¹

The vault immediately to the left of the apse gave on to the chapel of St Theodore, which connected with the Phylax, or Treasury, of the palace. Like the Octagon beside the old private apartments in the upper palace, the vault in front of St Theodore's served as a vestry. The emperor's vestments were kept there, and he was vested behind the curtain before various ceremonies in the Chrysotriklinos or any of the churches on the lower terrace.

Proceeding counter-clockwise, the central vault on the northern side gave on to a structure called the Pantheon, about which all we know is that it was big enough for at least one high official to wait in before ceremonies; and the next vault, immediately to the left of the western entrance, articulated with the Diaitarikion or steward's room. Behind the curtain of this vault was a bench on which the Papias, or door-keeper of the palace, placed the keys when he had opened the Chrysotriklinos. In addition to the main doors of the western entrance and those in the eastern apse, there were at least two other ways into the Chrysotriklinos on the northern side, through the Diaitarikion and the Phylax, whereby officials could come and go

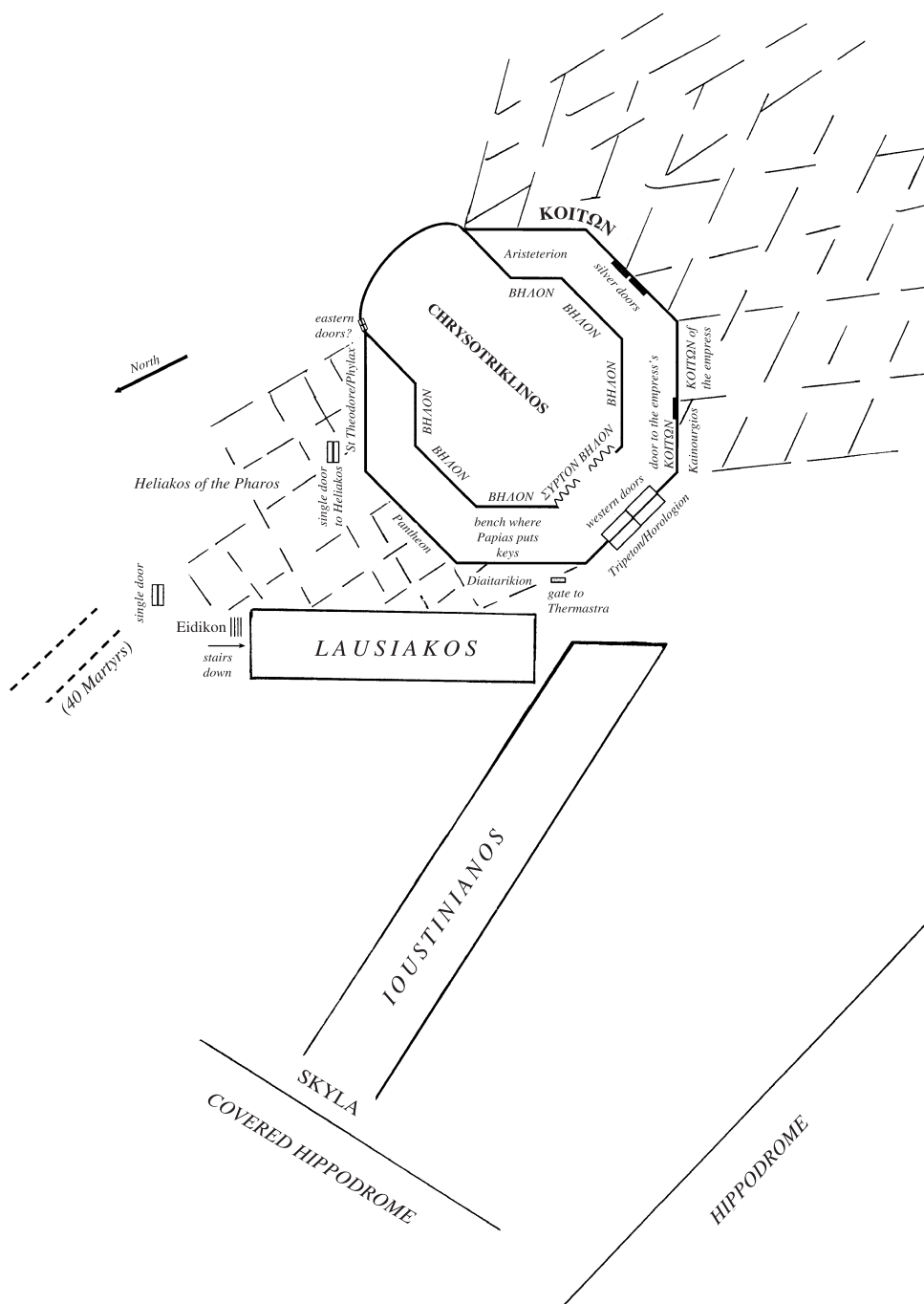


Figure 13.3 Sketch plan of the Chrysotriklinos, drawn by J. M. Featherstone.

unseen behind the curtains which shut off the central space. Thus, it was this northern side which articulated with the public parts of the palace.

The vaults on the opposite, southern, side of the Chrysotriklinos gave on to the private apartments of the emperor and empress. The entrance to the Koiton of the emperor appears to have been in the wall of the central vault. There was a bench behind the curtain here, and the doors to the Koiton were of silver. The vault immediately to the right of the western entrance is mentioned as the place where the patriarch divested himself of his stole after blessing the meal at banquets; and in the wall of this same vault there was a direct entrance to the Koiton of the empress. The remaining vault, just to the right of the eastern apse, is the probable location of Constantine VII's Aristeterion, or breakfast room, where other members of the imperial family, including the children, could come from the Koiton to join the emperor for dessert in the company of select guests at the end of banquets in the Chrysotriklinos.²²

From the two comparatively scanty chapters of the *De cerimoniis* on everyday ritual we learn that the palace was normally opened every morning after Matins, thus shortly after dawn.²³ The Hetairiarch or chief of the company of guards, together with the weekly rota quartered within the palace, first opened a complicated passage from the courtyard of the Daphne leading to the Lausiakos, and then, together with the Papias, opened the western doors of the Chrysotriklinos. Then they went into the other adjoining hall, the Ioustinianos, and passing through it, opened the gate on its opposite end which gave on, through a porch called the Skyla, to the so-called Covered Hippodrome. This latter was a part of the old upper palace, and the gate in the Skyla was the most direct entrance to the newer lower palace. Corresponding in position with the so-called Stadium of Domitian's palace on the Palatine, the Covered Hippodrome was not a racecourse at all, but a rectangular garden surrounded by galleries. It was here that imperial officials awaited the opening of the palace and entered to take their places "in procession," that is, in the order of their rank, on benches in the Ioustinianos.²⁴ This daily procession is the survival of the Roman *salutatio Augusti* or, more particularly, the *cottidiana officia*, when the emperor greeted high officials. As in the case of its classical antecedent, however, we cannot know whether all imperial officials came for this procession every day: no particular officials are mentioned for weekdays. The attendance of even the highest officials is indicated on ordinary Sundays, but the procession was held on such Sundays only when the emperor so desired.²⁵ Unfortunately, the *De cerimoniis* tells us nearly nothing about where the everyday business of administration was conducted. There is mention of the daily opening of bureaux (ὑψηκρητεῖα) beside the Lausiakos and the Eidikon or Imperial Privy Purse, and it is here that the Logothete, or chief official for foreign affairs, awaits his summons by the emperor. We must assume that a fair number of people were admitted to these bureaux each day.²⁶

The procedure for the everyday procession was the following. At the end of the first hour, thus at about seven o'clock, when all had taken their places, the head of the weekly rota of servants assigned to the Chrysotriklinos knocked thrice on the doors of the Koiton. This was as close as anyone but the servants of the bedchamber got to the emperor's private apartments.²⁷ At the emperor's command, the servants of the bedchamber opened the doors and vested the emperor in the *skaramangion*, or coloured silk tunic, which the chief of the guards had placed on the bench beside the

doors to the Koiton. The emperor then entered the Chrysotriklinos and, going into the eastern apse, he did reverence to the image of Christ and sat down, not on the main throne in the centre of the apse – this was left empty on ordinary days – but on a golden *sellion* or chair on the left side of it.²⁸ He then summoned the Logothete, who entered through the western curtains drawn aside by the Papias. On entering the first time – though not subsequently – the Logothete, as with everyone who entered the presence of the emperor, fell to the floor in *proskynesis*, or obeisance; the *salutatio* had given way to the *adoratio* already in the late antique period.²⁹ The emperor then commanded the Logothete to bring in whomever he desired to see. On non-feast-days, when there was no special business, the Papias gave the *minsai*, or dismissal – from the late Latin *missa* – by shaking his keys at the end of the third hour, around nine o'clock. On hearing this, the officials made their way out of the Ioustinianos to go home. From notes appended to this section we learn that on ordinary Sundays the emperor sat on a sellion covered in purple silk on the right side of the throne. On weekdays he wore only a skaramangion without the gold-bordered cloak; on Sundays he also put on the gold-bordered cloak. On weekdays the high officials wore the scaramangion in the procession; on Sundays a red *sagion*, or short cloak. To receive foreign dignitaries, the emperor sat on the purple-covered sellion as on Sundays, wearing a gold-bordered cloak with pearls and, if he desired, a crown. A further note states that the same order was followed when the palace was opened in the afternoon, though no exact times are given.³⁰ On Sundays, before the *minsai* were given, the Artoklines or banquet-master read out the names of those invited to dine. Banquets were held in the Ioustinianos or in the Chrysotriklinos itself. The emperor sat at a table set apart from the others, the ἀποκοπή. With him sat only his family and the very highest officials such as the Caesar and *zoste patrikia*, the female “Girdled Patrician,” who were most often also his relations, and the patriarch. Other officials were seated at other tables in proximity to the emperor according to their rank.³¹

This was the bare minimum of everyday ritual. On most days it would have been augmented by other ceremonies which, depending on their solemnity, were either performed completely in the lower palace or involved going to the old upper palace and St Sophia as well. Lesser religious feasts were celebrated on the lower terrace, with a liturgy in one of the palace churches, such as the Theotokos of the Pharos on the terrace beside the Chrysotriklinos, or St Basil's chapel in the Lausiakos, followed by a banquet.³² Such personal celebrations as the emperor's birthday or the newly revived Broumalia were also confined to the lower terrace, with a ballet in the Sigma-Triconchus complex and a banquet in the Chrysotriklinos.³³ Promotions of all but the highest officials were performed in the Chrysotriklinos, for example those of a *strategos*, or a *koubikoularios*,³⁴ or, at a higher level, a *patrikios* or a *zoste patrikia*. Like state receptions in the Magnaura and celebrations in St Sophia on great feast-days, the promotion of a Patrikios or a Zoste Patrikia involved the full assembly of all the officials. The Chrysotriklinos now took on a more solemn aspect. The emperor wore his crown and sat on the central throne – not a sellion at the side – and the *koubikoularioi* stood in a semicircle in the apse behind him. Beginning at the curtains before the western doors, the Papias censed the Chrysotriklinos with a thurible, and then censed the emperor. The officials were admitted according to their rank in a series of eight entrées or “curtains,” as they were called, and performed the *proskynesis* under the eye of the Master of Ceremonies. When all had entered, the

candidate was brought in to the emperor and invested in his or her office, whereupon the whole assembly acclaimed the emperor with the shout “Many Years.” (As Orthodox bishops are greeted still today.) Then all went in procession through the old palace, and the emperor and the new Patrikios or Zoste Patrikia were acclaimed at set points by the circus factions. The procession continued to St Sophia, where the new dignitary received communion and the blessing of the patriarch. A Patrikios would then be escorted home by the factions, whereas a Zoste Patrikia would proceed to the Magnaura, where she herself was the object of another ceremony of proskynesis by the wives of imperial officials. She then returned to the lower palace, where, being usually a member of the imperial family, she lived.³⁵

Now, we note here that the actual rite of promotion of a Patrikios or Zoste Patrikia was performed in the Chrysotriklinos. Likewise, foreign envoys were received there to conduct the real business of their visit. But their first audience, as in the case of the Tarsans in 946, was always held with great pomp in the Magnaura and followed by an itinerary through the old palace fitted out to impress them.³⁶ As in the promotion of a Patrikios or Zoste Patrikia, however, these old buildings served as little more than a ceremonial backdrop on the way from the lower palace to St Sophia or the Magnaura. (One thinks of the antique architectural elements in the background on icons.) The same is true even on great feasts such as Easter, Christmas and Pentecost, when the emperor went in a grand procession, or *πρόκενσος*, to Hagia Sophia, though every effort was made on these occasions to bring the old palace back to life.³⁷ Very early in the morning all the paraphernalia – the Great (processional) Cross of St Constantine, the Rod of Moses, the Roman sceptres, the *ptychia* (whatever they were!), and all the rest – most of which were now kept in the Treasury beside St Theodore’s or in the Theotokos of the Pharos, were taken out and set up in what was apparently their traditional places in the old palace. The imperial crown and vestments were also sent up from the lower palace and laid out in the Octagon beside the old Koiton on the courtyard of the Daphne. On this day the lower palace was not opened as usual but all the imperial officials and the circus factions went directly, in their parade clothes, to set points in the old palace along the itinerary to be followed by the emperor. The most important stops were the Augusteus, where the servants of the Chrysotriklinos and the Company of guards acclaimed the emperor; then St Stephen’s church beside the hippodrome, where the emperor revered the Cross of St Constantine; then the Octagon, where the emperor was vested and crowned for the feast; then back through the Augusteus, where the Logothete was waiting to perform the proskynesis; then to the porch of the Augusteus called the Golden Hand, where the emperor received the proskynesis of the *magistroi* and other high officials; then across the Onopodion for the proskynesis of the Drungarios of the Fleet; then to the Consistorium where another cross of Constantine and the Rod of Moses were set up and the Protasekretis and imperial notarii were waiting; then through the porticoes of the Candidati, the Exkoubita and the Scholae, where the emperor was acclaimed in Latin – now generally unintelligible – by the imperial guards who bore as many of the ancient banners and standards as could be kept in repair.³⁸ Next came the Tribounalion, where the emperor was acclaimed by the circus factions. Then he proceeded through the Propylaion of the Holy Apostles to the Chalke Gate for more acclamations by the factions; and from there he went to St Sophia for the liturgy.

For state receptions in the Magnaura, imperial officials went directly at the first hour of the morning to the Magnaura, and the emperor went privately (*μυστικῶς*), as he always did when not taking part in a formal procession, through a system of corridors which brought him up from the palace to the Magnaura.³⁹ After such a reception or after the liturgy in St Sophia, the emperor normally returned to the palace privately through the corridors, whereas the officials and foreign guests who were invited to dine made their way to the palace through the old buildings on the upper terrace. By the tenth century banquets were almost always held in the Ioustinianos or the Chrysotriklinos, where we find the only mention of kitchens in the *De cerimoniis*.⁴⁰ On special occasions banquets might be accompanied by the choristers of St Sophia and the Holy Apostles, who stood behind the curtains of the side vaults of the Chrysotriklinos. The playing of organs marked the entry of the various courses of the meal.⁴¹ On great secular holidays there might also be a ballet, either before the banquet in the Sigma-Triconchus complex on the lower terrace or in the Chrysotriklinos during the meal. On each of the twelve days of Christmas, however, ancient custom was preserved and banquets were held in the Triklinos of the Nineteen Couches reclining in the Roman style.⁴²

Another part of the old palace where particularly ancient ceremonies persisted was the Kathisma on the hippodrome. There are six lengthy chapters in the *De cerimoniis* which describe in detail the procedure for races and the appearance of the emperor on such holidays as the anniversary of the City on 11 May.⁴³ These chapters contain precious information taken from much older sources. But again, we must be wary of antiquarianism. For our present purposes, the description of the races put on – or, we might say, staged – for the Tarsans in 946 is much more telling. Here again, as in ceremonies elsewhere which have nothing to do with the hippodrome, we see the circus factions reduced to a purely ornamental function as chanters of acclamations and dancers. Moreover, the races themselves appear as little more than another pretext for the extravagant display of costume; there is a total disregard for sport, equal honours being given to the winning and the losing faction.⁴⁴ One can only wonder what the guests made of these races! All this would suggest that the hippodrome, once a place where the ruler confronted the populace and the factions took a live interest in the races and issues of the day, had also become, by the tenth century, a sort of museum piece, with stylized ceremonies repeated at set dates in the year and on special occasions.⁴⁵

But whatever the nature of the ceremonies of the hippodrome, the fact that the Kathisma was included within Nikephoros Phokas' walls in 969 proves their continuity. The case is less certain with other ceremonies in the old palace described in the *De cerimoniis*. Imperial coronations are said to commence in the Augusteus, marriages in the church of St Stephen beside the hippodrome and the lying in state for funerals in the Triklinos of the Nineteen Couches; the promotion of a Caesar is also placed in the Nineteen Couches, and that of a Magistros in the Consistorium.⁴⁶ But, as we have already seen, even if the Magistroi were still promoted in the hall where the canopy stood, the name of the Consistorium and its original function had been forgotten, and the ceremonies there, with furnishings brought from the lower palace, must have been very artificial. Likewise, one wonders how long Constantine VII's restoration of the Nineteen Couches from a state of dilapidation lasted.⁴⁷ Indeed, can we even be sure that ceremonies were still performed in the old palace at

all? The only contemporary coronation described in the *De cerimoniis* is that of the same Phokas in 963. This, too, is a splendid example of antiquarianism. Parts of these ceremonies were copied from the description of the coronation of Leo I in 457 by Peter the Patrician – it is in fact because of this borrowing that the excerpts from this author were included in the *De cerimoniis*.⁴⁸ Phokas' coronation began, as that of Leo had done, with acclamations by the factions before the Golden Gate outside the city, followed by a triumphal entry through the Golden Gate. Proceeding along the Mese, or main street of the city, amidst the acclamations of the populace, Phokas went to St Sophia for coronation by the patriarch. Unfortunately, the end of this chapter is lost in the Leipzig manuscript of the *De cerimoniis*, and unless it is discovered in the palimpsest, we shall never know whether there were also ceremonies in the old palace.⁴⁹ However, it is a curious coincidence that Phokas chose not to commence his reign in the old palace, much of which his walls would soon destroy, but preferred instead the Golden Gate which, we now know, was redecorated as a triumphal arch in this same period.⁵⁰

Phokas' activity provides us with a good example for the conclusion of our survey of Byzantine ceremonial and the palace. A hundred years later, the historian Skylitzes considered Phokas a destroyer because his walls wrecked many artworks, that is, buildings of the old palace.⁵¹ But nevertheless, Phokas acted in the best Byzantine tradition: even in destroying certain old traditions he replaced them with other, long-obsolete usages which better served his present – in this case military – aims. Such conduct is typical of *De cerimoniis* and of Byzantium in general: all new measures had to be presented after old models. And here we come back to the distorting mirror.

NOTES

- * A slightly different version of this chapter appeared under the title "The Great Palace as Reflected in the *De Cerimoniis*," in Bauer 2005b: 47–61. *Cer.* refers to the two versions of the *De cerimoniis* listed below as Reiske 1829–30 and Vogt 1967.
- 1 About these two manuscripts, *Lipsiensis* I, 17 and *Chalcensis* 133 (125) + *Vatopedensis* 1003, see most recently Featherstone *et al.* 2005.
- 2 *Cer.* I, Preface, I, pp. 1–2 Vogt and *Cer.* II, Preface, 516₁₆–517₁₈ Reiske.
- 3 *Cer.* I, p. 29–14 Vogt.
- 4 The most important studies on the palace based on the *De cerimoniis* and other texts are still Beliaev 1891; Ebersolt 1910; and Guillard 1969, I; and most recently Bolognesi 2000; Bardill 1999 and 2005.
- 5 Mango 1974.
- 6 Chapters from Peter the Patrician: *Cer.* I 93 (84), 104 (95) p. 386₂₃, 433₉ Reiske.
- 7 Kletorologion = *Cer.* II 52, ed. Oikonomides 1972: 81–235.
- 8 For the localization of the Chrysotriklinos on the lower terrace, see Mango 1997: 45–6.
- 9 On the restricted use of the term τὸ παλάτιον, see Bolognesi Recchi Franceschini and Featherstone 2002. "Sacred Palace": e.g. *Cer.* I 1, I p. 16₃₀ and 28₂₁ Vogt; I 33 (24), I p. 127₅ Vogt; II 9 p. 540₄ Reiske; II 12 p. 550₁₃ Reiske; "Sacred Koiton": e.g. *Cer.* I 1, I p. 17₁₀ Vogt.
- 10 One entered the palace directly from the Regia, the continuation of the Mese running beside the Augustaion: *Cer.* I 100 (91) p. 415_{13–14} Reiske.
- 11 On the topography of the upper palace see Bardill 2005: 7–23.
- 12 When John "the Fat" Komnenos revolted in 1200 he first found his way to the palace barred at the "dwellings of the axe-bearers," namely the Scholae beside the Chalke. Then, having gone under the seats of the hippodrome to reach the gate of the Kareia beneath the Kathisma, he had to break this latter down and overcome those guarding it: Heisenberg 1907: 248–259.
- 13 For the walls of Nikephoros Phokas, see Mango 1997: 42–6 and his fig. 5. We have marked them in our Figure 13.1.

- 14 According to Theophanes Continuatus 1838: 142. 19–22, Theophilos even had the everyday procession (about which see below) transferred to the Triconchus. There is no mention of this in the *De cerimoniis*, where the Sigma and Triconchus are mentioned only as the emperor passes on his way to the old palace e.g. Cer. I 19 (10), I p. 65.15–21 (Vogt), or as the setting for ballets and acclamations in honour of the emperor on special feast-days, e.g. Cer. I 75 (66), II p. 106₂₀–108₂₄ Vogt; Cer. II 18 pp. 600₃–603₁ Reiske. The most informative passage for the Nea is Cer. I 28 (19), I p. 108_{20–6} Vogt, where we see that one went down a stairway from the terrace of the Chrysotriklinos and turned right to reach the narthex of the Nea; but there is nothing about the church itself.
- 15 Cer. II 15 pp. 573_{8–9}, 578_{13–14}, 584_{11–12} and 595_{7–8} Reiske. For the date of the later redactor's work, see Featherstone 2003: 243–4, and 2004 *passim*.
- 16 E.g. curtains of the Chrysotriklinos hung in the Consistorium: Cer. II 15 = p. 573_{9–11} Reiske; chandeliers from the Nea hung in various buildings (on chains also brought from elsewhere): pp. 571_{1–2}, 18–19, 572_{4–5}, 13–14, 18–19, 573₄ Reiske; archway in the Tribounalio blocked off with silk hangings: p. 583_{11–12} Reiske. On this question see Bauer 2005a: 162.
- 17 For a recent ideological interpretation of the various places and modes of the emperor sitting on the throne, see Dagron 2003b. On the “throne of Solomon” see Berger 2005: 68.
- 18 For these parallels see Featherstone 2005: 847–8.
- 19 Cer. II 15 pp. 580_{15–18}, 581_{12–16} Reiske and II. 1 *passim*.
- 20 Cer. II 15 pp. 519₁₈–520₁ Reiske.
- 21 For these and other details of the side vaults, see Featherstone 2005: 848–51.
- 22 As during the celebration of the Broumalia: Cer. II 18 p. 603_{3–6} and 7–9 Reiske; and after the banquet for Olga of Russia: Cer. II 15 p. 597₁₆–598₂ Reiske.
- 23 Cer. I 1 p. 518₁–522₁₈ Reiske is about the everyday procession on weekdays; Cer. II 2 pp. 522₂₀–525₁₅ Reiske on ordinary Sundays.
- 24 For the topography of the Covered Hippodrome and the other buildings involved in the daily opening of the palace, see Bolognesi Recchi Franceschini and Featherstone 2002: 39–44.
- 25 For the *salutatio*, see Winterling 1999: 117–38, and esp. 117–18 on the Cottidiana Officia. On ordinary Sundays the Magistroi and Patrikioi are mentioned together with the Drungarios of the Fleet: Cer. II 2 p. 523_{12–13} Reiske.
- 26 Opening of the ἀσκηρῆτα Cer. II 1 p. 519₈ Reiske; Logothete waiting there: p. 520_{6–7} Reiske. There is also mention of old bureaux near SS Sergius and Bacchus, but only as a place through which the emperor passes on his way to that church; they were apparently disaffected: Cer. I 20 (11), I pp. 79_{14–15} and 80_{23–4} Vogt.
- 27 The only exception is on the occasion of the birth of a son to the emperor, when the wives of imperial officials were admitted to the empress's Koiton to see the mother and baby, under golden bedclothes, and present their gifts: Cer. II 22 p. 618_{6–18} Reiske.
- 28 One thinks of the throne on which the Gospel is placed up to the present day, after the manner of the εἰσιμασία, in the audience hall of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul.
- 29 See Winterling 1999: 29–32
- 30 All these notes are included in the chapter on the weekday procession: Cer. II 1 pp. 520₁₂–522₁₈ Reiske.
- 31 Sunday banquet-roll read out by the Artoklines: Cer. II 2 p. 525_{9–11} Reiske. About the ἀποκοπή and seating at banquets, see Oikonomides 1972: 28.
- 32 E.g. on the feast of St Basil (1 January) the liturgy was celebrated in the Theotokos of the Pharos with a banquet afterwards in the Chrysotriklinos: Cer. I 33 (24), I 127_{1–21} Vogt.
- 33 Birthday: Cer. I 70 (61), II pp. 86–7 Vogt; Broumalia: Cer. II 18 pp. 599.22–607.14 Reiske.
- 34 *Strategos*: Cer. II 3 pp. 525–8 Reiske; *koubikoularios*: Cer. II 25 pp. 624–7 Reiske.
- 35 *Patrikios*: Cer. I 57 (48), II pp. 51–60 Vogt; *zoste patrikia*: Cer. I 59 (50), II pp. 63–6 Vogt.
- 36 The Tarsans and the Daylamite (Sayfaddawla) and Olga of Russia were all received first in the Magnaura: Cer. II 15 pp. 583₁–584₂₄, 593_{18–21}, 584₁₆–595₅ Reiske; the Tarsans and Olga were then received subsequently in the Chrysotriklinos: pp. 586₁₅–588₁₄ and 596_{17–20} Reiske (the Chrysotriklinos is not named here, but Olga is summoned from the adjoining Kainourgion where she had been waiting). (Translation Featherstone 2007.) On the reception of the Tarsans see Bauer 2005a: 154–62.
- 37 The very first chapter of the *De cerimoniis* is devoted to this grand procession: I 1, I pp. 3–28 Vogt.
- 38 Latin acclamations for the feast: Cer. I 1, I p. 81₉ Vogt. The fossilized and corrupt nature of this ceremonial Latin is clear from the examples preserved in the *De cerimoniis*, e.g. the acclamations of

- the *koubikoularioi* at Christmas: Διθ . . . μούλτους ἄννους, φιλληκήσιμε: Cer. I 32 [23], I p. 125²⁸⁻³¹ Vogt. According to the inventory of banners etc. kept in the Church of the Lord beside the Consistorium – evidently a sort of chapel of the adjacent Exkoubita, Candidati and Scholae of the old palace – twelve of the eighteen standard-holders had been repaired in the Fourth Indiction (AD 946), and the other six were out of repair: Cer. II 40 p. 64¹³⁻⁵ Reiske.
- 39 Order for receptions in the Magnaura: Cer. II 15 pp. 566¹⁵⁻⁵⁷⁰₁₀ Reiske.
- 40 The door to the kitchen opened into the adjoining Lausiakos: Cer. II 1 p. 519³⁻⁴ Reiske.
- 41 On the function of organs as “givers of signals” within court ceremony see Berger 2005: 66.
- 42 Christmas: Cer. II 52 pp. 175²³⁻¹⁸⁵₄ Oikonomides. The banquet for the Daylamite (Sayfaddawla) was also held in the Nineteen Couches “after the manner of Twelfth Day”: Cer. II 15 p. 594³⁻⁵ Reiske.
- 43 New edition of the chapters on the hippodrome (I 77 [68]–82 [73]) by Binggeli *et al.* 2000.
- 44 Description of the costumes of the factions, choristers from St Sophia and the Holy Apostles and hippodrome employees fills most of the section on these races: Cer. II 15 pp. 588¹⁹⁻⁵⁹⁰₁₁ Reiske; “for the sake of display before the Saracen envoys,” the emperor commanded, in contradiction to the “old order,” that the losing faction should also accompany the winner in the victory celebrations: Cer. II 15 p. 590¹¹⁻¹⁵ Reiske.
- 45 About this ceremonialization of the races, see Mango 1981: 344–50.
- 46 Coronations of both emperor and empress begin in the Augusteus: Cer. I 47 (38), II p. 16 Vogt and I 49 (40), II pp. 113–122 Vogt; marriages in St Stephen’s: Cer. I 48 (39), II p. 64⁵ Vogt; lying in state in the Nineteen Couches: Cer. I 69 (60), II p. 84¹⁻³ Vogt; promotion of a Caesar in the Nineteen Couches: Cer. I 52 (43), II pp. 269–275 Vogt; of a Magistros in the Consistorium: Cer. I 55 (46), II pp. 40²⁰⁻⁴³₂₉ Vogt.
- 47 Cf. Theophanes Continuatus 1838: 449¹⁷⁻⁴⁵⁰₃.
- 48 Account of the coronation of Nikephoros Phokas in Cer. I 105 (96) pp. 438²⁻⁴⁴⁰₁₁ Reiske (borrowings from Peter the Patrician: p. 439¹⁰⁻¹⁷ Reiske [cf. Cer. I 100 (91) pp. 410¹⁵⁻⁴¹¹₁₃ Reiske]); cf. Featherstone 2004: 114.
- 49 There is one folio missing here from the *Lipsiensis*, and the account breaks off at the beginning of the office in St Sophia (p. 440¹¹ Reiske). Fol. 265 of the *Chalcensis* part of the palimpsest contains this passage of chapter I, 105 (96) but, alas, it breaks off a few words earlier than in the *Lipsiensis*, with ἐνέδυσαν p. 440¹¹ Reiske. Perhaps the subsequent text will be found in the Vatopedi part.
- 50 See Mango 2000: 181–6.
- 51 Cf. Skylitzes 1973: 275⁷⁹⁻⁸³.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

RHETORIC AND PERFORMANCE



Emmanuel C. Bourbouhakis

Who speaks is not who writes, and who writes is not who is.

—Roland Barthes

Byzantine texts have routinely been branded as “rhetorical” not in a bid to explain them, but to impugn their merit. Until recently, the pairing of “rhetoric” and “performance” in the title of such an essay would have signalled abiding prejudices against Byzantine literary culture and an unflattering portrait of its audiences. Such verdicts issued from long-standing biases, chief among them being the ill repute attached to rhetoric as a perversion of language’s capacity to convey truth and meaning. From its beginnings in antiquity, rhetoric has been under a sort of cultural indictment, charged with insincerity and the provision of an elaborate and ultimately decadent form of verbal theatre, inimical at once to truth and artistic authenticity. I wish not to disprove the charges against Byzantine rhetoric in this essay, mistaken though I find them, but to concede them, albeit provisionally, in order to consider the other side of rhetoric’s allegedly debased linguistic coin: performance.

While many scholars have been satisfied to label Byzantine literature “rhetorical,” that is, contrived and insincere, there has been a collateral failure to acknowledge the performative side of verbal artifice or the theatrics of insincerity which such a characterization necessarily implies. Not to mean what one says, a frequent accusation levelled at Byzantine texts, implies performance, albeit as barely disguised conceit. Similarly, the elaborate displays of linguistic virtuosity or dramatic form, however plodding and arcane they may seem to us at times, called upon no small measure of performative ability on the part of the author-orator, who composed with a view to oral delivery. To appreciate this, we need to bear in mind that both notions of performance, oratorical and theatrical, were essential before live audiences. The expert use of language aimed at by rhetoric in Byzantium was conditioned above all by the needs of performance at specific occasions. The better part of the texts which have come down to us, such as saints’ lives, funeral orations, wedding and birthday celebrations, inaugural lectures, praises of emperors, addresses to powerful men and women, as well as novels, and perhaps even some histories, were composed for some form of recital.

There were always a great many more listeners in Byzantium than readers. Hearing focused the attention on qualities of a text best appreciated when effectively performed. Byzantine audiences were not averse to transparently rhetorical elements in oratory. Language arranged according to prescriptions of rhetoric can aim at

diverse effects, one of which is the display of rhetorical virtuosity itself. The performance of such rhetoric in Byzantium was undoubtedly a staged departure from the necessarily lackluster speech of everyday life. It was intended to mark an occasion as being out of the ordinary. Such rhetoric, which many modern commentators have assumed was almost absurdly unintelligible to most Byzantines, was probably facilitated by the effects of voice and performance broadly speaking.

Neither rhetoric nor performance, however, may be succinctly defined without surrendering the breadth of actual experience each represents. We need look no further than our own broad application of “performance” to such diverse occasions as theatre, music, speech or the “performance” of one’s duties, to appreciate that we mean different yet somehow related things. Each of these uses denotes something distinct, while all share significant connotations rooted in etymology, cultural practices and social history. The simplest definition may be the best: *the fulfillment or execution of an act*. We may then acknowledge that in some instances, the fulfillment of the act of authorship in Byzantium anticipated oral delivery before an audience. While this did not exhaust the life of a text, which might then be copied and studied privately by another author-orator, it did prove decisive in the marshalling of rhetoric for effective presentation to addressees.

Rather than insist on one definition of performance, I rely on examples drawn from Byzantine texts to illustrate a variety of performance types. All are linked to rhetoric as a means of arranging language for audiences of listeners. Other significant types of performance could be adduced. The performance of social, political or cultural identity, be it gender or ethnic affiliation, comes to mind.¹ The aim of the present essay, however, is not to exhaust the possible applications of performance to Byzantine society. It is, rather, to give voice to muted aspects of rhetoric in Byzantium by focusing attention on the performance of texts across a variety of genres. Likewise, the range of meanings one may attribute to rhetoric now exceeds the bounds of such a short essay. The simplest, and oldest, definition of rhetoric, the planning and ordering of discourse, was the one the Byzantines themselves inherited and assiduously cultivated. Rooted in an oral culture, rhetoric amounted to carefully delineated procedures for the choice and arrangement of words with specific occasions in mind. These procedures varied over time, but they remained consistently dependent on performance for their success.

From the time it began to be formally taught in classical Greece, rhetoric offered prescriptions not for abstractly persuasive argument, but *persuasive performance of argument*, the “staging” of speech. The range of meanings attached to “performance,” however, necessarily varied with the diversity of genres of oratory or literature. Bearing in mind this pluralism, I wish to focus here on performative aspects of Byzantine rhetoric in the sense of a text’s voiced and/or enacted display before an audience. What follows is not an exhaustive register of performative genres in Byzantium, valuable as that would be. I offer examples of texts whose rhetorical nature was underwritten by performance in order to make the case about the link between the two.

The range of performance supported by rhetoric was considerable. Its starting point in language was necessarily the voice. In the words of one scholar, “[a]ll the means, which . . . rhetoric employs [in Byzantium], is designed for acoustic perception.”² At its most basic, this involved the calculated distribution of vocal and

syntactic elements in a manner which joined sound to sense. While the bond between oral performance and rhetoric went back to antiquity, its persistence in Byzantium should be understood as proceeding from the evolving occasions which called for elaborate verbal displays.

Written texts existed and sometimes even circulated in Byzantium, as in the rest of medieval Europe. But oral delivery before an audience, rather than private reading, dictated rhetorical norms, as it had always done.³ Publication, in a manner of speaking, was achieved through performance. The collections of surviving manuscripts and our preoccupation with their copying and transmission have long drawn our attention away from the significantly more common experience of oral performance and its attendant aural reception. The words of a text were precisely arranged and abetted by the sound they made when voiced aloud. We read the words in Byzantine manuscripts silently to ourselves today, as a series of propositional statements, and for that reason often find them wanting as literature. But when delivered with exact attention to its inscribed vocal requirements, a Byzantine text may well have achieved its purpose to entertain or edify an audience of listeners.

In fact, it may well be that the term “literature” is misleading, especially if it conjures up printed texts intended for individual reading. The Greek term for applied rhetoric, *logos* (λόγος), had accommodated the advent of writing even as it remained significantly rooted in the vocal artistry of speech. In Byzantium, study and even use of the written word was still most often preliminary to elocution.⁴ Writing, as well as reading, buttressed the spoken word. “Without reading aloud,” one scholar has noted, “much of Byzantine rhetoric is not conceivable.”⁵ Imperial panegyrics, addresses to officials, orations for feast-days, funerary speeches, no less than homilies or sermons, were delivered before listeners. Rhetoric aimed at composition intended to be voiced and heard. Each genre had its own distinct performative needs, ranging from the annunciatory function of an imperial oration, in which the qualities of an emperor were laid out in a speech proclaiming his fitness to rule; or the public address to a high official, often used to make a plea; church sermons containing dramatic illustration of religious dogma; as well as vivid portrayals of a saint’s unwavering faith through quotations, dialogue and eyewitness testimony of miracles.

Each of the above was grounded in rhetorical prescriptions and examples whose basis was effective performance, frequently involving explicit dramatization and verbal theatrics on the part of the speaker-reader. No less dependent on rhetoric and its potential contribution to oral performance, moreover, were categories of literature not immediately associated with any ceremonial occasion at court or in church, and rarely considered performative genres, like historical narratives, novels or letters, which might be voiced by the author or someone else in private settings before a select audience. Indeed, much of what scholars habitually refer to as “literature” in Byzantium resembled a script rather more than a text designed to be read silently.⁶ Copies of such script-like texts were most often made as exemplars of the masterful application of rhetoric to speech for various occasions. In cases where the text itself formed the occasion, like the letters filled with wit and literary play, or narrative fiction, perhaps even historiography, the text would have still relied on a captivating performance.

A readership, in today’s familiar sense, was not entirely unknown, but all

indications are that it rarely served as the basis for what we would call a literary career.⁷ The ability to write, or, more accurately, to compose, for an audience remained paramount. And while not every work contained in the surviving manuscripts was meant to be voiced before listeners, there is insufficient recognition that certain genres were patently and almost exclusively oral in character and aim.⁸ No doubt it would be a mistake to hear performance in every Byzantine text, a mistake as fundamental, however, as remaining deaf to it in those that clearly were.

* * *

Over the centuries occasions for the performance of rhetoric in Byzantium fluctuated. Even when they diminished, as they did during the instability caused by iconoclasm in the eighth and ninth centuries, social and political venues for rhetoric never entirely disappeared. The imperial court, with its wealth and jealously guarded prerogative over most promotions in Byzantine society, offered the greatest opportunities for a man of skill in composing and performing speeches. The innate virtues and accomplishments of the emperor and his benevolent stewardship of the empire were regularly articulated in meticulously staged oratory at court. Orations in praise of the emperor and his policies combined technical virtuosity of vocal performance with the necessarily theatrical display of unstinting sincerity. It was the role of performance to inflect the occasion with the appropriate drama and verbal decorum. Just as ecclesiastical festivals and liturgical rites symbolically reenacted the events they celebrated, imperial ceremony had to incarnate the events and figures it set on display, through symbolism as well as language.⁹

After the eleventh century, a number of these speeches were usually composed and performed by the “master of rhetoric,” who occupied an imperially sponsored chair of rhetorical education.¹⁰ But other, equally skilled, men of letters could answer a commission, or perhaps offer to compose a speech for an audience at court or at a patron’s home.¹¹ In return a rhetor might hope to gain a sponsor. The desire to outdo peers with consummately crafted speeches elicited rhetorical exhibitionism from author-orators, and this competition added the drama of rivalry to that of rhetorical hyperbole.

With characteristic self-confidence, the eleventh-century polymath Michael Psellos, arguably the most versatile rhetorician up to his time, trumpeted his superiority over his rivals in the art of rhetoric. Psellos took pains to portray himself as a respected counsellor to emperors, like the Homeric figure of wise Nestor, renowned for his sweet-sounding words, counselling the great warrior kings of the Greeks on the plains of Troy:¹²

But I also addressed the public as often as was appropriate and more nobly than the old man from Pylion [Nestor], and I proclaimed and declared no less than if I had been a prophet and commanded to do so by God . . . and the whole audience stood up at once . . . and expressed its preference for me over both the allies and the Trojans as one “of glancing helm” [like Hector], and decorated me with the laurels of excellence more than the others.¹³

Competition among rhetors in Byzantium was not decided on the basis of texts alone; the brilliance of a speech was a function of the performance it enabled. Psellos

employs the metaphors of contests, such as the wreath of victory, because it was apt to the public displays of rhetorical athleticism performed before appreciative audiences.

Refusal to put one's rhetorical talents on display, on the other hand, appears not to have been an option for a man skilled in rhetoric. In a work which may, ironically enough, have been intended for performance, the twelfth-century writer and bishop of Athens, Michael Choniates, questions the motives and intellectual integrity of those who yearn to flaunt their skill in language. The title of the work, *An Address to Those Who Accuse Me of Having No Desire for Exhibition*, adapts the Platonic opposition of genuine learning as against superficial display of rhetorical prowess. The premise of the dispute, a culture of rhetorical exhibitionism served by sophistic mercenaries, tells us something about the perceived correlation between rhetoric and performance in the twelfth century, the time of Byzantium's greatest literary flourishing.¹⁴

Beginning in the title, Choniates employs variants of the verb *deiknumi* (δείκνυμι), whose root forms the basis of *epideictic*, used to designate the largest portion of Greek rhetoric for celebratory or commemorative occasions. Choniates' text opens with a revealing analogy between the mythological figure of Proteus and present-day sophists in Byzantium. At issue here is the rhetorician's agility in "putting on display any and all forms." Choniates takes his fellow rhetors to task for a variety of intellectual shortcomings and moral or ethical flaws in their unprincipled exploitation of rhetoric. But the leitmotif of the essay is a culture of unbecoming rhetorical self-display and theatricality:

If he [the rhetor] should ever succumb to performance and should surround himself with an audience, then he will have carried off the honour of being like a monkey and will present himself in ridiculous fashion and he will end up imitating those things by which the spectator and listener is overcome; and in sum because he chose to be subservient to the opinions of others he could end up "dancing the Kordaks"¹⁵ if he intends to entertain those before whom he performs.¹⁶

Choniates, or the persona he adopts here (in good Protean fashion), rejects rhetorical display as the only viable end of education and learning. He is not interested in a reputation acquired through spectacle and pandering. He will not betray the lofty promise of *philologia*, love and mastery of language, for the base rewards of *epideiksis*, ostentatious performance. Whether in fact Choniates held to such a view, or the text was itself a consummate rhetorical act, is not easy to say. The work bears many signs of *epideictic* rhetoric, not least its dramatization of his accusers' arguments addressed to him in the course of the argument. As Paul Magdalino notes in his history of twelfth-century Byzantium, Choniates' reproach to his peers implicitly confirms that "for all the variety of genres, occasions and venues, in which and for which [rhetorical] compositions were produced . . . they were all recognized as corresponding to the institution of rhetorical 'theatre'."¹⁷ Choniates' complaints about the shamelessly ingratiating aims of rhetorical performance, whether earnest or not, trade on the perception that a reputation for display, *epideiksis*, and its concomitant rewards, fuel rhetorical composition.

Most Byzantine rhetors had few ethical, let alone intellectual, compunctions about placing their skill in rhetoric at the service of the powers that be, much less about deriving the acclaim and opportunity for advancement which their ability to compose speeches could bring. Michael Choniates' own mentor, Eustathios of Thessalonika, a prolific and accomplished Byzantine rhetorician, earned himself the archbishopric of Thessalonika on the strength of his years of service to the court of Manuel I Komnenos as the author of orations in praise of the emperor. He was also, by Michael Choniates' own reckoning, an influential teacher of rhetoric.¹⁸ They were both part of a circle of intellectuals who came to prominence through the composition and performance of rhetorically impressive works (*pace* Choniates' claim to have eschewed such self-display). These orations are read today with a view to their so-called content, that is, whatever verifiable references we may glean from them. It rarely occurs to anyone to reconstruct them as *oral* performances whose contents were bound up with their *aural* effects.

This last point has been persuasively made by D. Roderich Reinsch, who has called for the editing of Byzantine texts in a manner which allows us to configure sense and sound as closely as they were intended and received by author and audience.¹⁹ Reinsch has made his case by demonstrating that the punctuation in the manuscripts of various Byzantine texts served as a notational system for oral delivery. Punctuation organizes the words for recitation, marking intermissions in time as well as sense, thus controlling the rhythm of the text's presentation. Most Byzantine punctuation was in accord with the organization of the text as an *oral* medium. This would not be so surprising a discovery were it not for the long-standing habit of forcing Byzantine texts into the syntactical arrangements common to modern European languages in the age of print and silent reading. Reinsch's reordering of the syntactical pacing of his sample texts reveals the role of vocal artistry in their composition. Intonation and other oral devices – subtleties of volume, pitch, tempo, silence, timbre – are not transmitted in the manuscripts, though it is safe to assume that rhetoricians routinely used them to convey character, humor, irony, excitement or admiration.

Rhetoric provided the organizational principles for such oratory: the support lent to sense through sound in patterns of alliteration and assonance; techniques of amplification through carefully timed parenthesis, periphrasis and synonymia; variations of balance, antithesis and paradox; as well as less discernible but no less vital qualities of performance, such as tone, gesture and demeanor. Byzantine handbooks survive detailing some of these rhetorical principles studied by authors, though they can hardly begin to convey the thoroughness with which rhetoric permeated the teaching and handling of language.

The most common, and suggestive, term to designate both the setting and the audience for such performances, at least in cases of non-liturgical texts, was the *logikon theatron* (λογικὸν θέατρον), perhaps best translated as “literary recital.”²⁰ As the passages by Psellos and Choniates above indicate, more than just a hint of “theatricality” could still be implied in the word. A somewhat elastic term, *theatron* described the occasion of a rhetorical performance, as well as the audience and the setting for such performances.²¹ In a typical reference to such an occasion, the twelfth-century rhetor Michael Italikos describes the impression made by a letter at a *logikon theatron* in terms which underscore the performative aims of rhetoric:

[T]he Caesar's letter dripped like honey onto my ears; delivered at a literary recital, the letter was read and let out a resonating sound and melody, Oh oratory, Muse, and refined rhetoric, I know not the extent and manner, . . . how it delighted, how it inspired everyone with pleasure. Had it not possessed a temperate melody, stately and steady rhythm, and appositely dignified diction, we, both the letter's herald and the audience of its contents, might have been transformed into Dionysian revelers!²²

The insistence here on the letter's formal properties, its appeal to the senses, instead of what we might call its contents, underscores the extent to which rhetoric aimed at sonorous effects dependent largely on performance. The letter's subject matter was often the vehicle for showcasing such talent in composition. But the qualities listed above – resonant sound, melodic effects, rhythm or cadence, even diction – were only latent in the text and required the performer's alertness to their potential. Italikos no doubt exaggerated the effect on the audience in order to flatter his powerful correspondent, the son-in-law of the emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118). But his choice of Dionysian imagery, with its enduring ties to theatre and poetic performance, tell us something of the cultural terms of reference employed by these medieval rhetoricians.

As Paul Magdalino has observed, the occasions of rhetorical performance identified as *theatron* constituted “the ritual by which the man of learning paraded his credentials and aspirations.”²³ No greater opportunity for such display of eloquence existed than an oration in praise of an emperor. Examples of such panegyrics from different periods abound. The following, composed and presumably delivered by Euthymios Tornikes, in praise of Alexios I, employs the highly theatrical pretext of deliberation about how best to describe the many virtues of the emperor, thus simultaneously enumerating said virtues while drawing attention to his own rhetorical skill. Appropriately enough, Tornikes refers to himself as “standing in the middle of all, putting on a performance before so illustrious and great an audience, about to ‘commemorate in song’ the emperor's achievements.”²⁴ Here again, the words *theatron* and *theatrizō* (“to perform” or “act before an audience”), together with the quasi-metaphoric *hymnigorizō* (“sing the praises” of someone), play on the performative character of such oratory. As the subject of such verbal spectacles, the emperor shared in the success of the rhetorical entertainment; as the vehicle for the praise of the emperor's virtues, the orator, in turn, had a share in the success of his subject:

To which one should I then turn, which beautiful order shall I praise? Which of the good emperor's [virtues] shall I make the subject of this part of my address? Shall I marvel at his courage and his firmness and fervor toward the barbarians and his burning ardor, so to speak, or his compassion and leniency to his subjects, the temperateness which King David displayed, the avoidance of conflict credited to Solomon, the gentleness, the humaneness and, to sum up, the absence of rage? . . . Both the apt words and the successive arrangement of the forms of address would fail me in my desire to call the emperor by terms suitable to his accomplishments.²⁵

All the rhetorical figures in this text, though evident on the page, gain considerably

from performance: the feigned deliberation of the opening questions (known as *aporia*), which enacts the appearance of spontaneous composition, followed by the antitheses and parallelisms of the subsequent clauses, as well as phrases of near equal length (known as *isocola*), reinforced by an almost rhythmical alliteration and other repeating sound patterns in words. A text such as this would have called upon no small measure of oratorical ability, over and above the verbal skill required for its composition. To describe its performance as mere “reading aloud” amounts to a grossly underestimated sense of the vocal elements necessary for its successful presentation, especially before an audience whose attentiveness to rhetorical detail was likely to have been more pronounced given the limited repertoire of themes.

So ingrained was the expectation and appreciation of rhetorical proficiency throughout Byzantine history, that the fourth-century Church Father John Chrysostomos, an early archetype of the successful Christian rhetorician, is said to have tried to discourage his congregation from applauding after sermons.²⁶ Whether in fact he did so matters less than the presumed plausibility of the anecdotal story. Worshippers were not supposed to fix their attention on the formal display of the sermon but on its spiritual and doctrinal contents. Moral edification, not entertainment, was the presumptive aim of the Christian homily. The church was not supposed to resemble a *theatron*.²⁷ But Chrysostomos’ resolve that the pulpit not become a venue for performance, or at least not applauded as such, could not turn the tide of dramatic declamation bequeathed by Greco-Roman antiquity to Byzantine society.

Christianity, a religion founded on biblical texts with no shortage of engaging oratory, did not eschew rhetoric. There was, to be sure, an anti-intellectualist strain in some quarters of the Church for many centuries. Refined eloquence was associated with urbane paganism. The purificatory asceticism of the Christian body found its rhetorical counterpart in a stripped-down form of expression. But, more often than not, this too was a rhetorical strategem. Having developed its own oratorical occasions in sermons, Christianity could no more renounce rhetoric than it could neglect the value of performance for its doctrinal teaching. Many of the rhetorical devices which lent dramatic immediacy and engaged the audience’s attention found their way into the sermons of Byzantium. Besides the rhetorically demanding oratory of the early Church Fathers, priests and bishops made frequent uses of dramatic techniques designed to bring the characters of a story to life before an audience. While no religious or liturgical drama such as that of western medieval Europe developed in Byzantine lands, there was no shortage of dramatic performance incorporated into religious oratory.

Sermons often took their point of departure from lections or liturgical readings drawn from the Bible, such as that for the Eucharist. In addition to the vocal skills necessary to fulfill the rhetorical prescriptions of the texts, the changes in voice required the priest or lector to impersonate, as it were, the holy figures as they appeared on the narrative stage of the sermon. Christian stories, in particular events surrounding the life and death of Jesus, offered abundant material for the performance of providential truth.

The liturgical ritual of the sermon might thus frame a highly dramatic episode whose success depended on the priest’s oratorical skill.²⁸ The fifth-century homily for the Virgin Mary, by Proclus of Constantinople, for example, contains parts which

could arguably be presented as a self-standing religious play.²⁹ In it, Joseph confronts Mary with accusations of adultery. The voice of the priest apostrophizes the audience in a hortatory address: “let us learn the meaning of Joseph’s ignorance,” he says to his congregants.³⁰ The relationship struck in the first-person plural “us” goes well beyond any straightforward notion of reading a text aloud. The text combines alliteration with assonance, coordinating synonymous clauses which expand on the same point and varying the theme slightly with each new phrase:

He did not know the mystery accomplished in the Virgin,
he did not recognize the miracle he was serving as deacon,
he did not know that the prophesied Christ had been born of his betrothed
wife.

He was not aware that the prophet in accordance with Moses would
proceed from the maiden who had not known the marriage bed,
he did not keep in mind that [she] could become a temple of God.³¹

In a patently theatrical verbal gesture, the priest then turns to speak directly to Joseph, telling him “you heard the words of the angel, ‘do not be afraid to receive your wife’.” After this he quotes Joseph’s extended reply before he resumes in his own voice and addresses the congregation once more: “let us hear what he said to her, disbelieving in the divine birth.” The text thus sets the stage, in more than simply metaphorical terms, for the dramatic exchange between Mary and Joseph:

“Do you think me sacrilegious
because you see me heavy with a child?”
And to this did Joseph once more say:
“It is not fitting for a decent woman
to behave out of keeping with reverence”
The saintly woman says:
“Accusing me of prostitution
will you not grant me opportunity for defence?”
And Joseph:
“So you insist on denying it
pregnant though you are this way?!”
The saintly woman:
“Demand the truth believing in the prophetic pronunciation
and you will learn exactly from it
the uniqueness of the lord’s conception.”³²

Instead of channelling the voice of a narrator, the priest must speak with a semblance of sincerity, then assume the parts of Mary and Joseph. Furnished with rhyming patterns and other sound effects lost in the translation, this *homilia*, or dialogue, takes up a significant part of the sermon. The necessary “staging” it elicited from the speaker points to an additional sort of performance as part of the most commonly attended ritual in Byzantine life.

The homily was but one of the genres of religious literature which depended on effective performance for its message. Religious texts composed for a variety of

occasions routinely availed themselves of the rhetorical means to introduce dramatic immediacy. The most common such device, studiously practiced in rhetorical exercises, was the adoption of the first-person perspective of a persona. Thus, in the sixth-century popular collection of edifying vignettes by John Moschus titled “The Spiritual Meadow,” in which important Christian lessons are narratively illustrated, we find a passage such as the following:

Polychronios the abbot told us a story, saying, “I used to see one of the brothers at the monastery of the Towers of the Jordan who neglected himself, never fulfilling the rule of holy Sunday. Then after some time, I see the one who [had] thus neglected, applying himself with all seriousness, and a great deal of ardor. And so I say to him, “You do well to do so, taking care of your soul, brother.” And he replies to me, “Lord abbot, I shall die soon.” And three days later he passed away.³³

Even the least dramatically inflected telling of such stories would have involved some fidelity to the shifts in narrative perspective. When recitation is taken into account, such passages reveal themselves as terse dramatic moments whose impact depends on the *performance* of the text. The virtual designation of speaking parts introduced by verbs or other markers of speech serves as cues for performance, not reading. The author endows the text with rhetorical devices such as dramatic pacing and strong verbal gestures of immediacy, while the speaker fulfills the rhetorical demands of the text and lends his voice to the different perspectives and shifts in tone required by the unfolding narrative.

Audiences did not just hear stories *about* people who had led inordinately pious lives, they often heard the holy man or woman speak and be spoken to. Performing a text could mean not just attentiveness to its eloquence, but enactment of its contents. The dialogue in saints’ lives, to name but one prominent genre, points to a popular culture of religious drama in all but name in Byzantium.³⁴ While such texts were not composed with the same archaizing rhetorical flourish of more profane genres, like imperial orations or literary works for *theatra*, religious texts were no less rhetorically controlled, since they, too, aimed at effective oral delivery.

* * *

The studied ease with which Byzantine authors composed works for performance proceeded from a relentlessly rhetorical education, one of whose key “preparatory exercises” (*progymnasmata*) was the “speech in character” (*ethopoiia*). This required the student to produce a text in imitation of a persona, usually in the midst of some highly dramatic situation. The subject could be biblical, like *What David might have said while persecuted by Saul and awaiting execution*; *What Death might have said in reaction to the raising of Lazarus*; *What the Mother-of-God might have said as she embraced her son, God, and Christ the Saviour at his burial*. Just as often, the setting was ancient myth or literature, and thus afforded an opportunity to rehearse rhetorical stratagems without the constraints of Christian dogma and decorum, like *What a sailor might have said seeing Ikaros flying high above while Daedalus grazed the surface of the water with his wings*, or Andromache’s mournful words at Hector’s tomb or Niobe bewailing the fate of her dead children.³⁵

As a school exercise *ethopoia* was meant to foster a sense of plausible character portrayal. Taken up by accomplished authors, it served as a vehicle for virtuosic display of wit and pathos. When voiced, however, these texts would have been out and out theatrical monologues. Above all, they instilled an alertness to the performative side of literature, broadly speaking. After all, the inclusion of such exercises in the curriculum did not aim simply at perpetuation of the exercise itself. Practice of *ethopoia* could also help the future rhetorician prepare for other, less obviously invented roles. The funeral oration, Byzantium's preeminent rhetorical genre, was one such occasion. It might in fact be argued that impassioned yet rhetorically controlled expressions of mourning were so commonly found among the Byzantine exercises of *ethopoia* because rhetors were frequently called upon to compose orations for funerary occasions.

Deceased emperors, bishops, powerful notables, as well as dear friends and family members, had to be mourned and fittingly memorialized in word as well as deed. In the case of emperors, affecting the appropriate grief was part of a larger rhetorical task in political propaganda. Sorrow and remembrance had to be verbally enacted before the mourners in attendance. The speaker had to wed high-minded eloquence to the pathos of lament. Since it often functioned as the last bid to shape the legacy of the deceased, as well as contribute to the reputation of the rhetor, funeral oratory was invested with memorable passages meant to fasten the attention of the audience on the verbal surface of the speech while simultaneously dramatizing the mournful recollection of the deceased's absence from life.

In a funerary speech for his father which must have called upon considerable performative talent, Euthymios Tornikes goes so far as to pretend the text itself is speaking to both audience and author:

The oration takes pity on this good *logothetes* and wishes to string together words free from sorrow . . . And if I might turn to address you, oh Logothete . . . How long will you grieve so bitterly? How long will you groan from the bottom of your heart? How long will you place such pains in your heart, suffering day and night? How long until you wipe the tears from your eyes? But do you weep because your father was wise and has left you and [because] he was "a man of great intelligence" and has gone away? You sigh, saying "woe is me, for a reverent man has perished from the earth." . . . For this reason you are downcast and you weep, so that your gloominess fills the *theatron* with sorrow?³⁶

It is tempting to imagine what performance of such a passage would have entailed. Besides the theatricality of attributing a point of view to the oration itself, the Greek text contains various puns and rhetorical figures which would have invited emphasis and precise delivery. The acknowledgement, moreover, of an audience with the word *theatron* in the last line signals the marked self-consciousness of performance found in so many genres of Byzantine literature.

CONCLUSION

Though it requires some conjecture and imagination on our part, we must try to locate the meaning of various Byzantine texts within their performative setting; in

effect, to correlate not just sense and sound, but ceremony, scenery and social surroundings, all the elements of spectacle which lent purpose to rhetoric in Byzantium. Questions about performance should be posed, even when no answer appears forthcoming. Do we possess even a silent record of the experience of Byzantine rhetoric? Are the texts in the manuscripts faithful copies of originals meant as an *aide-mémoire* or are they transmitted revised and rewritten for the scrutiny of a much smaller audience of readers? Answers, when they do come, are likely to vary from text to text; but they will come only if we pose the questions. To say that many texts had originally served their speakers as a sort of script is not to say that we read them as transcripts, as a reliable record of the details of performance. The texts may nevertheless tell us a great deal about the rhetorical underpinnings of performance.

Rhetoric was prized in Byzantium for many of the same reasons it has fallen into disrepute (though not disuse) in recent times: an inordinate attention to the verbal surface of the text, composed in accordance with the sound of words and the figures of syntax. At the heart of most characterizations of a text as “rhetorical” is the implication that it lacks substance, that its author has replaced argument and fact with artifice and ornament. Genres of literature constituted by formulaic elements, whether at the level of individual phrases or whole plots, are assumed to be a form of pretense. Such claims are neither wholly justified nor are they entirely without truth. Another, equally rhetorical, aesthetic bequeathed to us by the Romanticism of the past two centuries has made much of what animated Byzantine literary performance culturally inimical. We are embarrassed by transparent rhetoric. It was not so in Byzantium. A patently rhetorical style did not seek to disguise its origins in artifice, but asserted itself through performance in a bid for recognition. The wider, cultural and political circumstances and outlook which underwrote such literary taste remain to be fully understood. As one historian of rhetoric has observed, “[t]he rhetorical view of life conceives reality as fundamentally dramatic, and man fundamentally a role player.”³⁷ It may be that in aiming for and acknowledging performance of rhetoric, Byzantine culture was simply more honest with itself.

NOTES

- 1 The exemplary study of the performance of rhetoric in the pursuit of social and cultural identity affecting gender is Gleason 1995. The seminal text for the social analysis of performance was Goffman 1959, which was once remarkably influential and widely read. Subsequent approaches in this vein have been legion. For an instructive example of how far performance has come as an analytical category, see Schieffelin 1985 and 1998.
- 2 Hörandner 1981: 50 (author’s translation).
- 3 Coleman 1996; none of the conjectures about the extent of alphabetic literacy in Byzantium cast doubt on the predominantly aural reception of literature.
- 4 Hunger 1989.
- 5 Hunger 1989: 126 (author’s translation).
- 6 A similar point has been made by Mullett 2003b: 151, who writes of rhetoric “as the screenplay . . . for a fundamentally performative society.”
- 7 That audiences for most Byzantine literature were made up principally of listeners, rather than readers, is confirmed paradoxically in scholarly works whose titles, at least, emphasize writing and reading: Hunger 1989; Ševčenko and Mango (eds) 1975; and most recently Cavallo 2006.
- 8 Fatouros 1973 identified four such orations by the fourteenth-century rhetorician Michael Gabras,

probably meant as rhetorical exercises; all four, however, are consonant with the performative demands of rhetoric for live audiences.

- 9 For the significance of such ceremonial reenactments, see McCormick 1986.
- 10 Imperial support for rhetorical education formed the subject of a number of important articles by Browning 1962; for a summary of Browning's most important conclusions about rhetorical education, see Browning 1989.
- 11 Magdalino 1993: 336–7 cites two notable instances of sardonic caricature of such patently ingratiating efforts by rhetoricians in the twelfth century.
- 12 *Iliad* 1.247–9.
- 13 Littlewood 1985: *Or.* 9, 42–53; cf. Aerts 1990: *Hist. brevis*, 85, 65–75.
- 14 Mullett 2003b: 152.
- 15 A proverbially ignoble theatrical display which catered to the lowest tastes of the audience mentioned by Athenaeus (IA', 630E, 28; 631D) and Lucian, among others; cf. the entry in the Byzantine lexicon known as the *Souda*.
- 16 M. Choniates, Πρὸς τοὺς αἰτιωμένους τὸ ἀφιλένδεικτον, in Lampros 1880, 1968.
- 17 Magdalino 1993a: 339; for “rhetorical theatre” see below.
- 18 See n. 11 above; see also “Eustathios,” in Kazhdan and Franklin 1984.
- 19 I thank D. R. Reinsch for his advice in this matter. See also Reinsch in this volume.
- 20 The varying and evolving significance of this term in Byzantium is partially documented by many scholars: Hunger 1978: I 210f.; cf. Mullett 1984, esp. 175.
- 21 The term had been inherited from Greco-Roman times. See Pernot 2000: 440, n. 103: “le mot theatron désigne par l’extension tout salle de conférence, l’epedixis et le public lui-meme.”
- 22 Gautier 1972: 17.154.
- 23 Magdalino 1993: 339; cf. n. 21 above. See also Mullett 1984.
- 24 Darrouzès 1968: *Or.* 1.3.22–4.
- 25 Darrouzès 1968: *Or.* 1.3.
- 26 Gregory of Naz. *Or.* 42.24; PG 36: 488B.
- 27 Eusebius, another fourth-century Church Father, complained about Paul of Samosata’s “antics” before his flock: *Eccl. hist.*, VII, 30.9.
- 28 For a survey of the dialogue in early Christian literature broadly, see Hoffman 1966.
- 29 Attempts to see primitive scripts for actual plays in such homilies have floundered. Piana 1912 bears study since it accentuates otherwise neglected dramatic qualities of early Byzantine homiletic rhetoric; see also Piana 1936 for a survey of similar but less successful approaches to the question of Byzantine drama.
- 30 Leroy 1967.
- 31 Leroy 1967: 9.1–4.
- 32 Leroy 1967: 9.5–16.
- 33 Joannes Moschus, *Pratum spirituale*, in PG 87: 2852–3112.
- 34 The inclusion of such dramatic dialogue in Byzantine sermons continued unabated for centuries to come, a point well documented by Cunningham 2003: 101–13.
- 35 Hunger 1978, 1.92–120; Kennedy 1983: 54–70.
- 36 Darrouzès 1968: *Or.* 3.22.
- 37 Lanham 1976: 4.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

LETTER - WRITING



Stratis Papaioannou

I, your Laconian man, speak with brevity but, for you, I speak in a penetrating, sweet voice – I feel confident in doing so, because I find in you a well-disposed listener. How could it be otherwise? I preferred you above all others on earth – and you are worthy of this. May you remain as such for me and for those who care for such a fine man. Please do not accuse my brevity of speech. As you know, I am not a man of many words, just as I am not a man of many gifts. In my view, it is appropriate that the man of small stature and few means sends small and few gifts and writes brief and few letters. In this way, everything will be in agreement with itself and the whole will shine forth because of its similarity to its parts. This present letter, therefore, bears witness to the character of me, your friend, since I did not hesitate to be small in word and gift even toward you who are great in both word and gift-giving.

This is one of the seventy-seven letters that John Mauropous included in a collection of his rhetorical work – poems, letters and speeches – sometime in the last quarter of the eleventh century.¹ Mauropous (c. 990–1092?) was a well-established Constantinopolitan intellectual figure: he was a teacher and court rhetorician in his early career, then for about twenty years bishop of Euchaita, a city in the eastern parts of the southern shore of the Black Sea, and, toward the end of his life, he retired to a Constantinopolitan monastery.² The letter, cited here in its entirety, is perhaps not the most spectacular of Byzantine communications. Still, it is quite representative of medieval Greek epistolography and can serve well as a site upon which to map this most common Byzantine discursive practice: letter-writing.

Mauropous' text is called a "letter," in Greek *epistole*. It is notoriously difficult to offer a definition of *what* exactly a "letter" might be, and no new definition will be attempted here. Instead, based on the cited text, certain parameters of the phenomenology, rather than the essence, of Byzantine letters might be deduced.³ First of all, letter-writing comes about within a specific context. The writer/sender needs to communicate with another person, the reader/recipient, who is physically absent. This situation demands a certain discursive form: the letter is written from the first-person singular perspective always addressing another, a "you." This very basic

letter-form was adopted in Byzantium in order to communicate a variety of messages, information or ideas. As such, the letter-form is ubiquitous in Byzantine discourse; it is most conspicuous, for instance, in many of the imperial or ecclesiastic documents that a somewhat bureaucratic culture such as that of Byzantium produced in high volume (even if only a small fraction of these documents survives today).⁴ Furthermore, Mauropous' letter (included as this text is in a manuscript collection of an author's rhetorical production) is also indicative of a genre, the epistolary genre, *epistolimaios/epistolikos typos* or *charakter*. What genre means here is a set of expectations that pertain primarily to style (this is the meaning of the Greek words *typos* and *charakter*). The author uses a certain linguistic register: higher than everyday speech, but lower than other types of writing such as speech-making. He also employs rhetorical techniques, such as puns and allusions that he would have learned at school and practiced in other contexts of rhetorical performance (and there were many such contexts in Byzantium). These stylistic features combined with the basic letter situation justify Mauropous' generic, and not merely formal, description of his text as "letter."

But situation, form and genre are only half of what makes this a Byzantine letter; social setting comprises the other half. The written text, as transmitted in the manuscript, is only a small trace of a larger ritual of communication that would have linked Mauropous to his unnamed addressee. For instance, as is apparent, the letter originally accompanied some kind of gift; indeed the gift itself was most likely Mauropous' main "message." For it was a gift or, in other cases, a favor that linked Mauropous in a bonding relationship with his correspondents; the letter was meant to escort and affirm that relationship. After all, a letter is "a conversation of a friend to a friend," as a late Byzantine rhetorical manual puts it.⁵ Friendship is a key concept here, for building bonds, alliances and networks constituted the social function for which most Byzantine letters were produced. There were certain features that characterized Byzantine friendship. For instance, friendship is not a private matter; there is often a wider circle implied (note how Mauropous alludes to "others" twice). Letter-communication in Byzantium was usually between two male friends, as is most likely the case here. What also links the author with his reader(s) and affirms their shared social status is a certain aesthetics. That Mauropous speaks of his "sweet" voice is not coincidental; the letter is meant to be pleasant, to convey aesthetic beauty, to function even as an object of art. For this reason, Mauropous speaks his elevated Greek, employs his puns and makes his literary allusions. By appealing to certain aesthetics, Mauropous claims social distinction – hence why he may become important in the eyes of his friend, the great gift-giver. Letters play a fundamental role in achieving this distinction.

If seen in this perspective, Byzantine letters should be placed somewhere at the intersection of politics and literature. The following brief survey will offer some thoughts on Byzantine epistolography along these two converging fields.⁶

THE POLITICS OF COMMUNICATION

It would not be an exaggeration to say that, as has been said of pre-modern Islamic society and Arabic literature, letter-writing was "the most prominent type of writing" in medieval Byzantium.⁷ A recent inventory of late antique, medieval and

early Renaissance Greek letters detailed a list of approximately 280 letter-writers and some 15,480 letters that have survived from the fourth through to the fifteenth century.⁸ This is apparently only a small fraction of the letters produced in Greek during the Byzantine millennium. Those that survive are letters that for one reason or another entered a manuscript collection that itself survived. The extant letters are also usually only a portion of an author's actual letter-production; indeed, of the 280 or so letter-writers only 70 are represented with more than fifteen letters.⁹ Furthermore, there are only a few cases in which the correspondence between two writers survives. In the sources, we read of letters or, even, letter collections which we no longer possess.¹⁰ All in all, we can safely assume that Byzantine letter-writing was a remarkably voluminous discursive production.¹¹

A closer look at the extant letters and letter collections allows us to deduce some provisional conclusions regarding the social fabric behind this production. Take for example periodization. From late antiquity, it is the second half of the fourth and the early fifth centuries that represent the first notable rise in Greek letter-writing. Most of the largest, widely circulating and influential collections come from this period. A small rise is evident again in the sixth century, followed by a steady decline – the lowest point being the eighth century from which we have virtually no letter collections. Indeed, it is only in the tenth century that the genre begins to really flourish, continuing until around 1204, the year of the Fourth Crusade. About eighty letter-writers with several large collections come from just these three centuries. Then there is a slight interruption, and Greek letter-writing resumes its pace in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries which represent the last minor bloom of Byzantine epistolography (about ten collections).¹²

To some extent, these statistics may be due to coincidences in the survival of texts (a reflection, for example, of changes in the technology of books or of the choices of later readers and scribes). Yet combined with other evidence they corroborate known trajectories in the history of Byzantine urban culture. The late fourth, the sixth, the tenth through the twelfth and, then briefly, the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries are the periods when elaborate and flourishing urban settings exist in Byzantium interrupted by several smaller or larger periods of crisis. The spatial distribution of the surviving letter-writing production is also telling of where these settings are to be found. While during the late antique period Greek letter-writing is distributed throughout the eastern Mediterranean (with an emphasis indeed in the south-eastern parts of this region), after the ninth century almost all Greek letter-collections are associated with exclusively one center, Constantinople.¹³

What about the who's who of Byzantine letters? As already noted, almost the entirety of surviving letters stems from the hands of men; we have to wait until the fourteenth century for the single example of the letters of a Byzantine woman, Eirene Choumnaina (1291–c. 1355).¹⁴ Men also comprise the overwhelming majority of the addressees.¹⁵ As is the case with Byzantine discourse in general, letter-writing is a predominantly male and indeed androcentric production. Social class is also at stake. The extant epistolography represents almost exclusively only a minor part of Byzantine society: the educated members of its upper echelons that are associated with large urban centers. The only significant exception to this pertains to late antique Egypt, from which a significant number of private letters survive among the papyri.¹⁶ As far as we can tell, none of these letters ever became part of any letter

collection; that is, they never entered the Byzantine book culture and may thus not qualify as “letters” in the Byzantine generic sense of the term. Yet, they might be representative of a socially wider and quantitatively larger practice of written communication that might have existed throughout the history of Byzantium but simply did not leave any trace.¹⁷ As the current evidence shows, Byzantine epistolography represents the socially, economically and politically privileged of Byzantium.

Still, at least one further distinction can be made here. Among Byzantine letter-writers, two social types may be discerned. On the one hand, we find those who are already insiders of Byzantine aristocracy through family lineage, wealth or high administrative office, whether imperial, ecclesiastic or monastic. Writers like Gregory of Nazianzus, Theodoros of Stoudios or Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos use letter-writing in order to primarily strengthen or sustain their high social status. On the other hand, there are those who aspire to enter this insiders’ group and rise up the social ladder. Primarily from the mid-tenth century onwards we find teachers and rhetors, that is, intellectuals and discursive performers, who use their letter-writing skills in order to achieve social (and, as a result, financial) prominence; I am referring to authors like the so-called Anonymous Professor in the tenth century or Theodoros Prodromos in the twelfth. The point of this distinction is not to assert rigid boundaries between the two groups; not at all. For example, John Mauropous and his student Michael Psellos, one of the most significant Byzantine letter-writers, were intellectuals and performers who early in their career would belong to the former, while later to the latter group. Rather, the point of the distinction is to emphasize the politics that are inherent in Byzantine epistolography.

An essential part of this politics is, first of all, the Byzantine ritual of communication. As noted above, the edited letter is only a minor trace of a larger process. This process involved much more than writing. The exchange, for instance, of gifts of all sorts (from books to food) was a recurrent incentive for the writing of letters.¹⁸ Oral communication was also significant. In a world that lacked any sort of regular mail service, messages were delivered by friends, casual acquaintances, servants or slaves; these intermediaries were often the ones who delivered in person the actual message. Orality further determined the reading of a letter; as with most rhetorical Byzantine texts, letters were often meant to be read aloud, sometimes in front of a small group of friends, the so-called *theatron*. This is Michael Psellos in the eleventh century describing the reception of the letters of his addressee: “as if in a Pan-Hellenic theater (*theatron*), we gather together showing your letters to each other. We read them to each other, we compete. The one who can show the most beautiful letter is the one to come out as the victor in friendship, while the rest follow with their heads down.”¹⁹

A further step in the process was the “publication” of the letter, that is to say its likely inclusion in a manuscript collection. Mauropous’ self-made collection is a case in point, and we can assume that many letter-writers created their own collections, editing, revising and arranging their letters.²⁰ We possess few examples, the most notable ones being the collections of Libanius and, especially, Gregory of Nazianzus in the late fourth century.²¹ (Indeed, for the first time in the history of Greek writing, these two late antique writers invent – at least this is what the evidence suggests – the tradition of including letters as important examples of one’s own literary output; poems, narratives, treatises or dialogues had dominated the landscape until then.²²)

Once in a collection, letters were destined, indeed designed, to reach a larger audience.

Byzantine letters were thus anything but a matter of intimate private correspondence, in its modern conception. Rather, Byzantine letters were “socio-texts,” texts “designed, understood, and expected to circulate within designated epistolary circles.”²³ Between and beyond the two correspondents, the content of Byzantine letters could be shared by the scribe (often other than the author), the carrier, a circle of friends to whom the letter might be read aloud or to whom the same letter might be sent separately, and, if the letter was destined to enter a collection, a wider readership. These were socio-texts also in another sense. The primary function of letters in their immediate context was to create or sustain a social network, personal ties and allegiances, and to secure or grant the letter-writer a position within this network. Letters were thus means for social networking and self-positioning and the Byzantines knew this well. Let us look at these two features separately.

One of the recurring ideas in Byzantine epistolography is that the letter is and must be an “image of the soul”; as Mauropous puts it in letter 42, “this letter bears witness to the character of me, your friend.”²⁴ It is then part of the Byzantine epistolary expectation that the letter manifests the self, indeed the inner self, soul or character, of its writer (*psyche*, *ethos*, *charakter*, *typos*, *gnome* are the most common Greek terms). As Mauropous makes clear, however, character does not refer merely to the interiority of the author, to qualities that are essential to him. Rather, the self in question is also a result of social relations, a matter of social positioning. As Mauropous explains, the “character” that is witnessed in the letter pertains to the fact that he “did not hesitate to be small in word and gift” toward his addressee who is “great in both word and gift-giving.” Immediately, that is, Mauropous places his character under an intimate yet also hierarchical relation with his friend – Mauropous’ good character is associated with the fact that he knows, or so he tells us, what his appropriate place in the social context is.²⁵

The role of letters and even more so letter collections is thus primarily self-representation, not, as the Byzantines might claim – though as we shall see not unjustifiably – self-revelation.²⁶ This is the case because, in a competitive environment such as that of Byzantine urban societies, social authority was defined by achieving honor and avoiding shame. Therefore, it behooved men who wrote letters, regardless of their place in the social hierarchy, to advertise themselves, constantly present, or, in effect, make a name for themselves.

Social authority was also defined by constantly shifting personal relations. Thus those who wrote letters were further obliged to build allegiances, to create what were usually called “friends.”²⁷ We might be inclined to associate friendship (in Greek *philia*) with an emotion that links two individuals in a mutual, reciprocal and symmetrical relationship. But what the Greek word *philia* signified in a Byzantine context was often both more and less than that. It was more than a mutual relationship in the sense that friendship was imagined to involve a kind of ontological unity between persons. In the dominant Christian version, friends were united by divine grace that allowed for them to be what Gregory of Nazianzus memorably called “one soul in two bodies.”²⁸ By being more than a simple amicable relationship, friendship was an ideology. This was an ideology most eloquently summarized for Byzantine letter-writers by Gregory who Christianized, that is, further spiritualized,

classical Greek notions of male–male *philia* now contrasted in stronger terms to bodily, heterosexual or homosexual, relations.²⁹

But friendship was also less than a reciprocal relationship. In actuality, in Byzantium friendship more often referred to the rather fragile, asymmetrical and non-reciprocal relations of patronage and clientelism (this might be the case in Mauropous' letter 42).³⁰ By being related to patronage, friendship was a social necessity: the necessity of entering, building and enforcing social circles and hierarchies.³¹ It required of Byzantine letter-writers to learn and obey certain rules of etiquette, comportment and ceremony.³² Operating within this dual framework of friendship, Byzantine letters always navigated between ideology and social necessity, between idealism and pragmatism.

TOWARD LITERATURE

Thus far we have been preoccupied with Byzantine epistolography in the immediate context of its production. Yet letters, especially when they entered a manuscript collection, were also conceived and treated as *texts*, somewhat removed from their synchrony. In the rest of this contribution, I will focus on this textual dimension of Byzantine letters.

Let us turn again to some statistics. While 15,480 letters is an impressive number, and while many more letters were certainly produced in Byzantium, the manuscript transmission and history of letters and letter collection shows a somewhat different picture. Apart from a few exceptions, most letter-writers and their letters or collections survive in only a small number of manuscripts, sometimes in only one manuscript. This means that despite the popularity of the practice in virtually every moment of Byzantine history, letters as texts did not fare particularly well in the diachronical context of Byzantine book culture. Even those letter collections with large distribution could not compare with those texts that were particularly popular in Byzantium such as the Scriptures, patristic public rhetoric (especially the orations, homilies and sermons of John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianzus), patristic anthologies and encyclopedias (such as John of Damascus' *Fountain of Knowledge*), or a certain kind of hagiography, the Metaphrasteian *Lives*.³³ There are approximately 1,500 manuscripts of Gregory of Nazianzus' *Orations*. Yet there exist only 160 manuscripts of his *Letters*. And, while there are nearly 850 manuscripts of the *Lives* by Symeon Metaphrastes, some of the most significant Byzantine letter collections, such as those from the tenth century, survive only in one or two manuscripts.³⁴

Unlike other texts, letters and letter collections did not reach a wider readership beyond that of their immediate context. This is especially true with regard to the collections of middle and late Byzantine writers. For, as the manuscript evidence suggests, medieval Byzantine readers preferred to commission the copying of the letters of the late antique past, primarily the epistolary production of the fourth and early fifth centuries, rather than the letters of any later periods. This explains why the four largest collections are of a late antique date or why the medieval manuscripts of the letters of, say, Gregory of Nazianzus or Synesius of Cyrene are significantly more than those of any letter-writer after the middle of the fifth century. Late antique letter collections are those that did reach a somewhat larger readership.

They are those which Byzantine intellectuals of all periods wished to own, read and imitate.³⁵

This brings me to yet another feature of Byzantine letter-writing: the presence and function of preset authoritative models. A notable characteristic of comparable contemporary letter-writing cultures (in the Arabic south-east and the Latin west) was the development of detailed theories of letter-writing, along with practical manuals, models and guides. And though Byzantine epistolography shared many features with the practices of neighboring cultures, we will find nothing in Byzantium that would equal the kinds of epistolary manuals, formularies and theoretical treatises that supported Arabic letter-writing (the *insbā* literature) or were stylized in the western *ars dictaminis*.³⁶ This is not because Byzantine rhetoricians were not inclined toward stylizing theories of discourse; quite the contrary, Byzantium had inherited and further elaborated on detailed theories of rhetoric, namely public performative discourse.³⁷ Rather, it seems that, in the case of epistolary discourse – written and semi-private – Byzantine authors were content with the usage of a few authoritative late antique letter collections and the stylistic protocols promoted in them.

This *author-* rather than *rule-*oriented attitude might have contributed to the apparent exclusivity of Byzantine letter-writing. Since there existed no widespread easy rules that would help one become a good letter-writer, access to sophisticated education and reading practices was the necessary prerequisite; and this was available to a relatively limited number of people.³⁸ Simultaneously, however, the emphasis on model authors rather than preset rules might have also afforded Byzantine writers a certain creative freedom, playfulness and proclivity toward variety that are found in medieval Greek letter collections. Tradition and protocol, while certainly present in Byzantine epistolography, are filtered primarily through subjective choices rather than objective imperatives, and thus operate in a rather ambiguous fashion.³⁹

Exclusivity as well as playfulness, for instance, were simultaneously promoted by the elaborate use of literary allusion in Byzantine letters. From direct copying of entire earlier letters and acknowledged quotations of well-known maxims to playful references to multiple texts or secretive allusions to obscure information, wording or turn of phrase, Byzantine letters thrive in what has been termed intertextuality, which is basically an author's use of the texts of others in order to convey meaning.⁴⁰ Take, for instance, Mauropous' letter. The phrases "with brevity but . . . in a penetrating, sweet voice" and, a few lines later, "not a man of many words" are a quotation of a single verse from the third book of Homer's *Iliad*, where Menelaus is described as a concise but clear speaker juxtaposed to the more verbose, yet incomparably eloquent Odysseus (*Iliad* 3.214). Mauropous is not simply citing the *Iliad* here, a text that remained a schoolbook throughout Byzantine history. Associated with the proverbial idea of *laconic* speech (Menelaus is a Spartan, a *Laconian*), this verse also summarized an epistolographic topos, the notion that letters must be concise.⁴¹ Furthermore, in Byzantine rhetorical theory, this well-known Homeric description of Menelaus signified the antiquity and thus legitimacy and value of rhetorical discourse and its various types (personified by Menelaus, Odysseus and, another famous Homeric speaker, Nestor).⁴² There is, that is, much more packed in Mauropous' citation than simply a reference to a Homeric verse. Mauropous displays here his knowledge of epistolary decorum and, more significantly, his

proper rhetorical training. His aim is to show his participation in an exclusive traditional aesthetic that would link him with equally knowledgeable, highly educated, readers.⁴³

Maupous is constrained by the Homeric quotation to belong to a certain tradition, to follow a prescribed frame of mind. At the same time, however, he uses the quotation in a somewhat playful and creative fashion. After citing the Homeric adjective “not of many words (*ou polymythos*)” he resurrects another rare, ancient and rhyming word – in effect his own neologism: “not of many gifts (*ou polydoros*).”⁴⁴ This is not a mere play on words: Maupous has used the Homeric maxim in order to justify his trivial and poor gift to his friend. In effect, Maupous has created here what may be seen as an intellectual’s joke. *Tradition demands that I write only few words, why should I then be expected to give generous gifts?*

Witty humor is a regular feature of Byzantine epistolography.⁴⁵ Humor is a way in which Byzantine letter-writers explore and test boundaries. For letter-writing is not merely a discursive site where social norms, expectations and hierarchies are confirmed and perpetually replicated; rather, this is a discursive world where such norms can also be negotiated, and often transgressed.⁴⁶

Let us look at two examples of such transgression. Above, I wrote of the emphasis on self-representation that marks Byzantine letter-writing. The self-portraits that Byzantine writers put forth in their letters are often generic social types fixed by the expectations of epistolary decorum of educated and aristocratic circles. Yet they are not just that. Byzantine letter-writers often test the limits of such generic types by adopting what are inferior rather than socially dominant *personae*.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Byzantine authors routinely express personal feelings, intense emotions, satisfied or unfulfilled desires, private pleasures or sufferings, in a word *pathos* (a recurrent letter-writing term). The language that the Byzantines employ may often seem stylized or even overwritten to us, yet we should not read this stylization as fakery. Sometimes, Byzantine letters are read as if they disclose no feeling. However, the Byzantines were quite capable of expressing personal emotion; that the communicative codes by which such emotions are expressed have changed is not the Byzantines’ fault.⁴⁸ Indeed, if one were to search for autobiographical discourse in Byzantium, Byzantine letters would be the primary place to discover the mechanics and liberties, veils and revelations, of Byzantine discourse in the first-person singular.

Another contested field in Byzantine epistolography is the understanding of friendship itself. As noted above, the Byzantine ideology of friendship is founded upon the suppression of erotic, bodily desire for the sake of (primarily male-male) spiritualized relationships. But this is not unequivocally the case. We will encounter several Byzantine letter-writers who either contest the spiritual notion of *philia* altogether or who employ an intensely eroticized language in order to describe their relationship to various addressees.⁴⁹ At first glance, Byzantium may appear to be a world without love-letters, a world without its Abelard and Heloise. Yet at a closer look, one might discover *eros* at many turns and corners of Byzantine letters.⁵⁰ Indeed, it is medieval Greek eroticized letter-writing that first explores the kind of erotic discourse that will be adopted by those rhetors who revive erotic fiction in the middle of the twelfth century in Byzantium.⁵¹

The presence of autobiographical and erotic discourse in Byzantine epistolography

leads to one concluding remark. Of all genres of Byzantine writing, epistolography most consistently came closest to what we now call literature. Exegetical works, sermons, biographies, hagiographies and histories – in other words those texts that dominate the Byzantine discursive production and book culture – were primarily (though not exclusively) types of writing that aimed at communicating information, ideas, ideology and doctrine. These were writings preoccupied with promoting Byzantine truth and morality; texts meant to be didactic, useful. Byzantine letters were often also like that. Yet, simultaneously at their foreground occasionally lay an attentiveness to the limits of writing, and to whether writing itself can convey truth and presence. This attentiveness encouraged an otherwise unique appreciation of imagination, *phantasia*, and the pleasures that imagination afforded.⁵² Of all Byzantine genres, it was letter-writing that kept the desire to navigate the imagination most alive. Or, to put it differently, what letter-writing kept alive was the desire for fiction, for *literature*.⁵³ The first letter in Mauropous' self-made collection conveys this desire eloquently, and it is only appropriate to end this survey with his words:⁵⁴

I thought that it was already Autumn; not Spring. From where has this nightingale of Spring come to me now? Not from some grove or far-off forest . . . but it has flown into my own hands and from there it sings in the mood of spring-time, casting from nigh a spell over my ears . . . In its voice, this bird is a nightingale, but in its appearance, a swallow. For it sings in a penetrating, sweet voice, yet its image mixes two opposite colors. The black color of the letters is made vivid by the whiteness of the paper, just like lavish purple embroidery by a material that is glossy and translucent. Whether a nightingale or a swallow, this marvelous writing has filled my soul with perfect pleasure. It has convinced me to think that the season is truly a second Spring.

NOTES

- 1 Ioannes, the most holy metropolitan of Euchaita, *Letter* 42; Karpozilos 1990: 137, see also 233. This and later translations are my own.
- 2 On Mauropous' biography see Karpozilos 1990: 9–27; the monastery where Mauropous retired was the monastery of Petra, in the north-western part of Constantinople, with a significant library as well as a scriptorium.
- 3 For a recent attempt to define “letters” see Gibson and Morrison 2006; the authors focus primarily on ancient material, but many of their suggestions would apply to Byzantine letters as well. For a Byzantine definition see e.g. Ps.-Libanius, *Epistolimaioi Charakteres*, 2, in Foerster 1927, where we read the following: “Letter (*epistole*) is a conversation in writing between two persons absent to each other”; this definition is posited only as provisional, as the author first points out: “the epistolary style is varied and manifold” (paragraph 1).
- 4 For Byzantine documents see e.g. Dölger and Karayannopulos 1968; Oikonomides 1979 and 1985; for Byzantine imperial diplomacy see Mullett 1992 (reprinted as 2007: III); on Byzantine communication patterns see Moschonas 1993.
- 5 Joseph Rhakendytes, *Synopsis of Rhetoric* 14, in Walz 1834: 3, 559.4–5.
- 6 The focus of this chapter are thus letters in the somewhat narrow Byzantine sense of the term; I will not examine texts that simply adopt the letter-form (such as treatises or narratives), official written communications or letters embedded in other texts. For general comprehensive surveys of Byzantine epistolography see Hunger 1978: 199–239 = Hunger 1991: 301–57 and Tomadakis 1993. See also Sykutris 1932; Garzya 1985; Hatlie 1996; Mullett 1997: *passim*; Grünbart 2001: esp. 7–43; Hörandner and Grünbart 2003; and Grünbart 2005; for further bibliography see <http://www.univie.ac.at/>

- byzneo/BBESecondarySources1.htm. For surveys of comparable medieval traditions see Haseldine 1996 (medieval Latin) and Gully 2008 (Arabic); see also Kobler 1954 (Jewish).
- 7 Gully 2008: 5.
- 8 Grünbart 2001.
- 9 Of these, twenty-four authors with more than 100 letters (numbers based on Grünbart 2001, biographical dates from the ODB): Isidoros of Pelousion c. 360/70–† after 433 (2,022 letters), Libanios 314–c. 393 (1,544 letters), Neilos of Ankyra † c. 430 (1,051 letters), Barsanouphios † c. 545 (616 letters), Theodoros of Stoudios 759–826 (554 letters), Demetrios Kydones c. 1324–c. 1398 (540 letters), Michael Psellos 1018–78 (521 letters), Michael Gabras c. 1290–† after 1350 (462 letters), Basil of Caesarea c. 329–79 (350 letters), Patriarch Photios c. 810–† after 893 (329 letters), Gregory of Nazianzus (249 letters), John Chrysostom (237 letters), Theodoretos of Cyrhus c. 393–c. 466 (203 letters), Gregorios Kyprios c. 1241–90 (197 letters), Konstantinos Akropolis †1324 (196 letters), Patriarch Nikolaos I Mystikos 852–925 (193 letters), Michael Choniates c. 1138–c. 1222 (181 letters), Michael Apostoles c. 1420–† after 1474 (175 letters), Prokopios of Gaza c. 465–c. 528 (167 letters), Nikephoros Gregoras c. 1290/1 or 1293/4–† between 1358 and 1361 (159 letters), Synesios of Cyrene c. 370–c. 413 (156 letters), Theophylaktos of Ochrid c. 1050–† after 1126 (135 letters), Maximos Planoudes c. 1255–c. 1305 (121 letters), Ioannes Tzetzes c. 1110–† between 1180 and 1185 (107 letters). It should be noted that only a few Byzantine collections are available in English translation: those of Basil of Caesarea (Deferrari 1926–34), Gregory of Nazianzus (Browne and Swallow 1894), John Mauropous (Karpozilos 1990), Libanios (Norman 1992), Nikolaos I Mystikos (Jenkins and Westerink 1973) and Synesios of Cyrene (Fitzgerald 1926).
- 10 Mauropous' seventy-seven letters are only a selection, while, of his about sixty-five addressees, no one else's letters survive except those of Mauropous' famous student Michael Psellos.
- 11 Of course, letter-writing was remarkably voluminous only in the context of pre-modern societies with low levels of literacy (an average of 10 per cent or less of the population) and the limited availability of writing material and technologies. Indeed, before nineteenth-century Europe and the arrival of postal services, extensive letter-exchange was usually the privilege of only the social elite; cf. Gay 1995: 311–29.
- 12 Medieval Latin letter-writing followed a similar trajectory with three primary peaks: late fourth to early fifth century, then in the ninth and twelfth centuries.
- 13 The letters in this period are written by Constantinopolitans who either reside in Constantinople and correspond primarily with other fellow citizens who often temporarily reside outside Constantinople, or by Constantinopolitans who have been forced to move away from the City which nevertheless remains their emotional and notional center; for a mapping of the latter case see Mullett 1997: xvi–xvii and 180–1 on Theophylaktos of Ochrid.
- 14 Twenty-two letters; Hero 1986.
- 15 Cf. Grünbart 2005: 180–7; Guillard 1982; Talbot and Kazhdan 1991/2; Nikolaou 1993.
- 16 Cf. Hutchinson 2007; or Bagnall and Cribiore 2006. See also Goitein 1973 on similar letters from various societal strata circulating in medieval Jewish communities.
- 17 As far as I know, there exists no survey of the likely evidence for letter-exchange in the lower strata of Byzantine society; for an example of someone who, despite his minimal education, is said to have written many letters (that, as one might expect, did not survive) see Greenfield 2000: 21.
- 18 Cf. Karpozilos 1984 and 1995. In *Letter* 42 (lines 6–7), Mauropous alerts to the direct association of letters with gifts by playing with the etymology of “*epi-stellein*” (to write letters) which only accompanies (*epi*) gift-sending, “*stellein*.” For the anthropology of gifts in Byzantium and beyond see Cutler 2001.
- 19 *Letter* 223, ed. Kurtz and Drexel 1941: 265.23–7. For all these aspects of letter-writing cf. Mullett 1990 (repr. 2007: VI) and Mullett 1997: 31–43. On *theatra* see also Hunger 1991: 316–19.
- 20 We are fortunate to possess the very manuscript in which Mauropous published his collection; the manuscript is now in the Vatican library, *Vaticanus gr.* 676. There exists no study of Byzantine letter collections; for some discussion see Papaioannou forthcoming a; see also Constable 1976, whose remarks on the western medieval practices largely apply to Byzantium as well.
- 21 Cf. Trapp 2003: 16–17 on Libanios; and Gallay 1957 on Gregory.
- 22 There are Latin precedents to that (Cicero, for example), but we do not possess the letters, edited in a collection by the author himself, by any Greek writer before Gregory and Libanios. The earlier

tradition is dominated by fictitious or fictional letter-writing. See Trapp 2003 with Hodkinson 2007: esp. 283–8 and Rosenmeyer 2006.

- 23 Schneider 2005: 22f.
- 24 For this topos see Karlsson 1962: 94–6 and Thraede 1970: 157f.; cf. Koskenniemi 1956: 40–2; and also Littlewood 1976.
- 25 There is a clear sense of *order* here; cf. Mauropous’ “in this way, everything will be in agreement with itself and the whole will shine forth because of its similarity to its parts.”
- 26 That self-representation, i.e., *self-fashioning*, was at stake in letter-writing was known to those theorists of epistolary form (in the Roman Greek period), who associated letter-writing with the rhetorical mode of *ethopoia*, namely personification or character-presentation as well as character-making; cf. Theon, *Progymnasmata*, in Spengel 1854: 115.11f. See further Leach 1990; McLynn 1998; Conybeare 2000 (esp. pp. 131f. on the “relational” self); and Whitmarsh 2001, on various cases of pre-modern Greek and Latin self-fashioning, often through letter-writing.
- 27 Cf. Konstan 1997: 89.
- 28 Or. 43.18–22; the maxim, very popular in Byzantium, at paragraph 20.2 (ed. Bernardi 1992). Gregory is actually evoking earlier thought; cf. Plato’s *Symposium* 189c2–193d5 with Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 5.20 (on Aristotle); see also Michael of Ephesus (first half of the twelfth century), *In ethica Nicomachea ix–x commentaria*, in Heylbut 1892: 478.28–479.20.
- 29 Konstan 1996. Gregory’s theory-in-practice of friendship along with other later antique epistolary corpora filled the absence of a more systematic theoretical treatment of friendship; unlike the West, Byzantium did not possess something equivalent to Cicero’s treatment of *amicitia* (Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* play only a very minor role in Byzantine writing).
- 30 Cf. Mullett 1988, 1999a and 2003a. See also Limousin 1999 and, recently Messis 2008.
- 31 With a few exceptions (see e.g. Pouchet 1992; Mullett 1997; Schor 2007) we lack sociological or anthropological studies of the social make-up of these networks.
- 32 The most conspicuous such etiquette are Byzantine *forms of address*; for an extensive survey of 5,419 instances of such forms from the middle Byzantine period see Grünbart 2005. Another aspect of this etiquette is the ostensive humility of letter-writers who consistently avoid using the first-person singular (e.g. in the original Greek of *Letter* 42, Mauropous uses repeatedly the third-, rather than the first-, person singular). For moral, ceremonial and social expectations as manifested in epistolary topoi see Karlsson 1962 and Thraede 1970 with Koskenniemi 1956.
- 33 See Talbot and Munitiz in this volume.
- 34 See Gallay 1957 on the mss of Gregory’s letters with Somers 1997 on the mss of his orations. For Symeon Metaphrastes see Ševčenko 1990. For tenth-century epistolography see e.g. Darrouzès 1960; Westerink 1973; Darrouzès and Westerink 1978.
- 35 To give one of numerous examples: in his encomium of Mauropous, Michael Psellos comments on his teacher’s imitation of Gregory of Nazianzus; *Orat. pan.* 17.287f., in Dennis 1994.
- 36 Cf. Gully 2008 (on Arabic letter-writing) and Witt 2005 (on Latin *ars dictaminis*) with Mullett 1997: 133f. (on the Byzantine tradition); see also Boureau 1997. The first Byzantine manual to discuss (briefly) letter-writing is that of Joseph Rhakendytes in the early fourteenth century (see above, n. 5); for some rare Byzantine chancery handbooks see Ferrari 1913 and Darrouzès 1969.
- 37 On these see Kustas 1973.
- 38 See Cavallo 2006 on Byzantine reading culture.
- 39 For instance, in his encomium of Mauropous, Michael Psellos cannot decide whether to praise Mauropous’ knowledge of the epistolary genre or his unique and inimitable individual style; *Orat. pan.* 17.256–64, in Dennis 1994.
- 40 The phenomenon is so common that one of the most educated of Byzantine letter-writers, Ioannes Tzetzes, produced a quite extensive verse commentary explaining the various literary allusions included in his letters (ed. Leone 1968); a Byzantine anticipation of T. S. Eliot supplying footnotes to his *Waste Land*! On quotations in letter-writing see Mullett 1981 (repr. 2007: II); Littlewood 1988; and, especially, Kolovou 2006: 25–75.
- 41 Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Letter* 51 (on conciseness, clarity and grace) and 54 (on being “laconic”) (ed. Gallay) with Ioannes Tzetzes, *Letter* 87 (ed. Leone 1972) on laconic speech, citing among other things the same line from the *Iliad*, further explained in his verse commentary (*Chiliades* 12.523–6 and 5.317–37; ed. Leone 1968); see also Niketas Magistros, *Letter* 4.11–13 (also a citation of *Iliad* 3.214).

- 42 See e.g. Troilos (first half of the fifth century), *Prolegomena to Hermogenes' Art of Rhetoric*, ed. Walz 1834: 6, 47.29–48.20 and Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Commentary on the Iliad* 1.639.15–640.31, ed. van der Valk 1971.
- 43 On aesthetics as a means for social distinction see further Bourdieu 1984.
- 44 This rare adjective too is Homeric yet with the meaning of “richly dowered”; Mauropous is the first in Byzantium to use the word in the meaning “of many gifts.”
- 45 For a notorious example see Michael Psellos’ description of the monk Elias: Dennis 2003.
- 46 In this, epistolography is much like the ancient *symposia*; cf. Whitmarsh 2004: 52–67 for a useful discussion.
- 47 Synesius of Cyrene and, even more so, Michael Psellos’ self-presentations as being, rather than manly, feminine and, rather than stable and strong, soft and changeable are a case in point; see Papaioannou 2000. On the association of letter-writing with femininity in pre-modern literature see Lindheim 2003.
- 48 For some attempts to map the personal in Byzantine letter-writing and literature in general see Littlewood 1999; Galatariotou 1993; Agapitos 2008.
- 49 For an example of the former see Papaioannou 2007; for the latter see Papaioannou forthcoming b.
- 50 See Mullett 1999b and Messis 2008.
- 51 A similar case has been made for the birth of courtly love in twelfth-century medieval western Europe; cf. Jaeger 1999. For the revival of erotic fiction in Byzantium see Roilos 2005 and Agapitos forthcoming.
- 52 *Phantasia*, a usually negative term in Byzantium (associated with demonic influences and immorality), is often discussed and elaborated in positive terms in Byzantine letters. For a preliminary discussion of the Byzantine appreciation of (letter-)writing in relation to fiction see Papaioannou 2004.
- 53 There is a precedent for this in pre-modern Greek writing; cf. Rosenmeyer 2001.
- 54 Karpozilos 1990: 43–5, lines 1–14.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BYZANTINE POETIC TRADITION



Christopher Livanos

“Byzantine poetry,” is here defined as verse composed in the Greek language from the time of Constantine I to that of Constantine XI. This chapter will concentrate on developments in the Byzantine poetic tradition and comparisons between Byzantine and western poetry. Notions of subjectivity developed in comparable ways in the literary traditions of Byzantium and western Europe. Autobiographical topics likewise became more prevalent in Byzantine literature in the empire’s later centuries, although medieval Greek verse never had a poet as obsessed with himself as Petrarch or the love poets he inspired. Another important point of comparison between Byzantine and medieval western poetry is the challenge that poets in the Latin West as well as the Greek East faced in reconciling pagan culture with Christian faith. The enormous amount of literature that falls under the heading of Byzantine poetry necessitates discussion of literary trends, rather than close readings of specific poetic passages, throughout most of this essay.¹

Two of the earliest poets of significance, who may be called Byzantine by most standards, are Gregory of Nazianzos and Synesios of Cyrene.² These two highly educated bishops are noted for their union of classical form with Christian content. Gregory’s close friend Basil of Caesarea gave Byzantine culture its most representative expression regarding the proper attitude of a cultured Christian toward the wisdom of pagan antiquity when he wrote that one should take what is useful and leave behind what is not, precisely as the bee knows which parts of the flower to touch and which to avoid.³ Just how much of the flower Synesios thought safe is apparent in the following passage from his eighth hymn (verses 41–54):

Smil’ed Hesperus the golden,
Who smileth soft for Venus gay!
While that horn’ed glory holden
Brimful from the fount of fire,
The white moon, was leading higher
In a gentle pastoral wise
All the nightly deities!
Yea, and Titan threw abroad

The far shining of his hair
 'Neath Thy footsteps holy fair,
 Owning Thee the Son of God;
 The Mind artificer of all,
 And his own fire's original.⁴

The title “greatest Byzantine poet” has been given most often to the fifth-century hymnographer Romanos the Melode. In contrast to Gregory and Nazianzos and Synesios of Cyrene, who attempted to wed Christian faith with Hellenic culture, Romanos was inspired by Semitic literature. According to legend, he was a convert from Judaism. Whether or not this is true, a comparison of his work with that of the more hellenizing Christian poets tempts one to resuscitate paradigms of “The Jewish” versus “The Greek.” We can certainly understand why Byzantines believed that a poet in whom the language of the psalter is so alive must have had a Jewish background, but other Semitic influences, particularly the Syriac hymnographer Ephrem, also provide an adequate explanation for the distinctively Near Eastern character of Romanos’ hymns.

There is no doubt of Romanos’ poetic talents, but it is still curious that twentieth-century scholarship was nearly unanimous in its verdict that he was Byzantium’s greatest poet. Several epigrammists of the eleventh century could have been viable contenders. Theodore Prodromos was as technically skilled as any Byzantine writer and, if he was the author of the *Ptochoprodromika*, considerably more versatile than Romanos. Nonnos is certainly the Byzantine poet most widely read by classicists who do not normally work in Byzantine studies. Then there is George of Pisidia, whom, as Byzantinists are fond of noting, Michael Psellos compared to Euripides. Unlike Romanos, all of these poets followed ancient Greek models. I do not believe they were any more slavish in their use of classical forms than Romanos was in his emulation of St Ephrem the Syrian, but the esteem in which classicists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries held ancient Greek literature inevitably led to unfavorable assessments of later imitators of the classical tradition. Early scholars of Byzantine literature had no such cultural biases in favor of Romanos’ poetic role models, and thus they had no prejudice against Romanos himself. Trypanis, whose views on much Byzantine poetry could be quite harsh, held Romanos in the highest esteem and made invaluable contributions to textual scholarship on Romanos’ work. The few negative comments Trypanis made regarding Romanos’ work seem to stem from Orientalist aesthetic conceptions. He criticizes Romanos for a lack of proportion in a passage reminiscent of much Orientalist scholarship that has been famously studied by Edward Said. Talented though Romanos is, according to Trypanis and Maas, he is given to occasional excess and, once in a great while, his style is marred by distasteful ornateness.⁵ Romanos’ uniquely Semitic literary influences save him from any charges of slavish emulation of the Greek classics, but at the same time they expose him, as an oriental poet, to accusations that he lacks a classical sense of proportion and restraint.

The most celebrated poet between Romanos and Theodore Prodromos was George of Pisidia, author of long poems on the military achievements of the emperor Herakleios as well as an account of the six days of creation. Despite the esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries, fewer literary studies have been written on

him than on other Byzantine poets. The reason seems straightforward enough: the nakedly propagandistic tone in which he celebrates the military exploits of his ruler, Herakleios, tends to offend the modern reader. His *Hexaemeron* is less an account of God's activities during the six days than a meditation upon the created order. At times the piece indulges in vituperations against the Byzantines' theological and political enemies, but there are also passages in which Pisides evokes a trance-like intensity:

O distant Presence in fixed motion! Known
To all men, and inscrutable to one:
Perceived – uncomprehended! Unexplained
To all the spirits, yet by each attained,
Because its God-sight is Thy work! O Presence,
Whatever holy greatness of Thine essence
Lie virtue-hidden, Thou hast given our eyes
The vision of Thy plastic energies –
Not shown in angels only (those create
All fiery-hearted, in a mystic state
Of bodiless body) but, if order be
Of natures more sublime than they or we,
In highest Heaven, or mediate aether, or
This world now seen, or one that came before
Or one to come, – quick in Thy purpose, – there!
Working in fire and water, earth and air –
In every tuneful star, and tree, and bird –
In all the swimming creeping life unheard,
In all green herbs, and chief of all, in MAN.⁶

The eleventh century saw a flowering of epigrammatic verse that can truly be called a renaissance marked by the achievements of poets such as John Mauropous, Michael Psellos and Christopher of Mytilene. Slightly earlier was John Geometres (late tenth century), whose work is important as a precursor to the major epigrammists although he does not attain their level of stylistic refinement and literary complexity.⁷

The late tenth and early eleventh centuries were the period of the hymns of Symeon the New Theologian, which are equally important in the history of Byzantine literature and Byzantine religion. A major literary motif in his poetic work is the manifestation of God as a light which can be experienced by the intellect of the contemplative mystic. His work does not formulate a systematic theology, but the language and imagery of his work became one of the major influences on Byzantine hesychast theology, which became the most politically and religiously divisive topic in the fourteenth century.

The current *Oxford Classical Dictionary* states that no creative work in the genre of the epigram took place after the sixth century. The eleventh century in fact saw several major poets adapt the ancient form to the social and artistic needs of their own time. Lauxtermann has demonstrated that the middle Byzantine period was characterized less by conscious imitation of the classics than with what he calls “modernism.”⁸ His attention to what is new in Byzantine literature is an important

and necessary contribution to a discussion that had been dominated for too long by the odd idea that Byzantines were merely imitators of the past who either would not have understood innovation or would have been offended by the suggestion that their writings were new and fresh creations rather than faithful replicas emerging from a venerable poetic mold.⁹

Lauxtermann argues with conviction that John Geometres was a masterful poet, and he builds an unassailable case that Geometres was a conscientious modernizer rather than a classicizer. His poems do not contain the fascinating interplay of classicism and modernism, of paganism and Christianity, that enrich the language and imagery of so much Byzantine poetry. The simplicity of his verse may appear as a defect to the twenty-first-century reader conditioned to look for intertextuality and multileveled irony, but in an early eleventh-century context, Geometres' simple elegance was a worthy artistic achievement. In contrast to Geometres' work, the poems of Christopher of Mytilene and John Mauropous are subtle in their allusions, often ironic, and complex in their symbolism and imagery; yet they, like Geometres, are also deeply personal. The sense of personal immediacy was Geometres' great contribution to Byzantine poetry. While later poets surpassed him in subtlety, without his influence it is unlikely that their work would have amounted to more than a series of intellectual exercises. His rather stark modernism assured that the classicizing tendencies of poets a generation or two after him would, at their best, remain personally and socially relevant, however elaborate their work might be.

It is anachronistic to exalt the criterion of innovation when judging pre-modern literature from Byzantium or anywhere else. It has rightly been noted many times that Byzantines valued tradition more than do modern westerners, but it would be odd to find a pre-modern society that did not. When we consider how modern scholarship has shown that Byzantine poets were original in their subject matter, meter and linguistic register, what puzzles us is how the image of Byzantium as a society with a thousand-year phobia of change ever took root. Byzantine poetry is not the first literary tradition to undergo such a reassessment. Before Tolkien published *The Monsters and the Critics*, Anglo-Saxonists commonly regarded *Beowulf* as garbled history rather than good poetry.¹⁰ In response to the question of why the troubadour Arnaut Daniel was held in such low critical regard in the early twentieth century, Ezra Pound remarked, "Because poets have not been able to read his language, and because the scholars have not known anything about poetry."¹¹ Taking care to avoid Pound's venom, we may note that Byzantine poetry was usually read until quite recently by scholars whose interests were not poetry *per se*: literary scholars who read Byzantine poetry were typically classicists already prejudiced by a tradition hostile to Byzantine culture, and the translations that existed typically aimed to be literal rather than literary.

John Mauropous was one of the first great epigrammists of the middle Byzantine period, and I believe his verse bridges the gap, as Lauxtermann has rightly pointed out, between classicizers and modernizers. His work strives to make the classical motifs speak to the realities of his own age. One of his most notable poems is a farewell speech addressed to his ancestral house.¹² The poem may commemorate Mauropous' departure from Constantinople to serve as bishop of Euchaita, or it may describe some other occasion, the details of which are no longer known. In the poem, Mauropous casts himself in the role of a Christianized version of the exiled hero,

referring to the house as his *trophos* (nurse) and thereby inviting comparisons between himself and such exiled heroes as Odysseus and Orestes, whose nurses figure prominently in the works of Homer and Aeschylus, respectively. The subsequent poem in Mauropous' collection describes the poet's restoration to his home. The careful sequencing of Mauropous' ninety-nine poems may be another instance of Byzantine literature anticipating a trend that would come to the West in later years when sonnet sequences and other systematically arranged verse collections became common.

Another of Mauropous best-known poems is an epigram pleading for the salvation of the souls of Plato and Plutarch. Mauropous is not so bold as to presume that his pre-Christian Hellenic heroes will truly be saved, but his clear wish for divine providence to find some way to work out the salvation of two non-Christian souls marks an important point in the history of what may be termed "Byzantine humanism." His broad-mindedness concerning the fate of righteous non-Christians, like his interest in autobiographical themes, is a trait Mauropous shares with the humanists of the Italian Renaissance.

Christopher of Mytilene, Mauropous' contemporary, was the most elegant Greek poet of the eleventh century and perhaps of the entire Byzantine period. Christopher composed four Calendars of Saints, two in classical meters, iambic and hexameter, one in the kanon form and one in stichera. He also wrote many epigrams on a wide variety of subjects pertaining to everyday Constantinopolitan life. His topics include chariot races, political events, sacred objects and rituals as seen by common worshippers, animals and the difficulty he had in keeping his books safe from a mouse infestation. Lamentably, rodent damage has prevented us from having a more complete collection of his work.¹³

Not the least of Mauropous' achievements was the formative role he played in the education of Michael Psellos, one of the most original and influential Byzantine thinkers. Psellos has been studied more for his contributions to historiography and theology than to poetry, but he was an accomplished and sometimes innovative verse author. A recent volume of scholarly essays has been published on Psellos as a literary author, though his verse receives little attention in it.¹⁴ Eustratios Papaioannou has recently drawn attention to poetic innovations in Psellos' work, notably the fact that Psellos seems to have been the first poet to identify the figure of Narcissus with the poet's voice.¹⁵ If Psellos was indeed the innovator of this important literary topos, we find yet another instance of Byzantine poets anticipating trends that would later become central to western European poetry.¹⁶

The twelfth century was a time of bold innovation in Byzantine literature. Four novels from the time survive, three in verse and one in prose. While the eleventh century is remarkable for the elegant dodecasyllables of John Mauropous and Christopher of Mytilene, in the twelfth century we see a greater variety of genres and a greater willingness to experiment. At a recent colloquium on Byzantine Literature, Ihor Ševčenko stated in his concluding observations that a common negative feature among scholars of Byzantine literature is an apologetic tone, and he told all the participants that there is no need to be apologetic, because we have been defeated. I hope I do not fail to heed Ševčenko's warning by beginning a discussion of the twelfth century with the curious *Christos Paschon*, an attempt at Christian tragedy with Jesus Christ as the protagonist. It is not a new observation that no true tragedy

existed anywhere in the Christian Middle Ages. Christianity is a religion with a comic worldview. The greatest literary work to come out of medieval Europe was entitled simply *Commedia* by its author, and tragedy did not reappear until Renaissance humanists attempted to reconstruct the culture of antiquity.

A more successful twelfth-century attempt to engage with the genre of tragedy is a poem, commonly known by its first line, which Ruth Macrides has translated as “An unprecedented report and an ultra-tragic one.”¹⁷ Panagiotis Roilos has characterized the genre of the poem as “tantalizingly elusive.”¹⁸ Its brevity, at 165 lines, as well as its overall rhetorical style mark it as clearly not an authentic tragedy, but use of the term *tragodia* in the opening line suggests that its twelfth-century author found the ancient genre of tragedy relevant to the poem’s subject matter. The poem is an account of a nun accused of cannibalism and murder, and allusions to Euripides have been found in the text.

Major developments in twelfth-century literature include increased use of the Greek vernacular and the appearance of four long works of prose fiction, commonly called the Byzantine novels. Important studies of Byzantine literature from the twelfth century have been offered by Margaret Alexiou and Panagiotis Roilos, notably in the latter’s *Amphoteroglossia*, an extensive study of innovations in the novel and in satire.¹⁹ I believe it is important to discuss Christopher of Mytilene as a figure who foreshadows several literary trends that Alexiou and Roilos have identified as important in twelfth-century literature. Christopher’s poems display a refined satiric sense. A notable epigram targets an arrogant doctor, thematically linking him with the medical satire found in the twelfth-century prose work *Timarion*. Christopher’s work consistently sympathizes with the non-elites of Byzantine society. His most famous poem is a jaded meditation on the insurmountable gap separating the rich from the poor, and in his concern for the lower classes he anticipates such twelfth-century texts as the *Ptochoprodromika*.

Michael Choniates has left little surviving poetic work, but among his verse is a poem on the city of Athens that I believe may be called the last great Byzantine epigram. It has been suggested that the poem was an epigram in the original sense, having been composed for a painting of the ancient city. This may be the case, but the poem itself does not attempt to reconstruct ancient Athens through visual imagery. Michael meditates instead on the impossibility of knowing the past and the limitations of language. The poem is noteworthy in that the line, “living in Athens I see Athens nowhere” anticipates the “looking for Rome in Rome” topos that became a common conceit in western poetry from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century. Another literary motif in Michael’s poem that anticipates a major trend in western poetry is the reference to secular love as a form of idolatry.

The most vibrant verse genre of the fourteenth century was the chivalric romance. The epigrammist Manuel Philes wrote an allegorical interpretation of a romance composed by one of his contemporaries, interpreting the protagonists’ secular love as a metaphor for love of the divine. Scholarship has been divided as to the validity of Philes’ reading. Some have maintained that Philes’ reading of Christian spirituality into secular romance is a form of textual violence akin to the medieval allegorization of pagan classics, while others, such as Roderick Beaton, have argued that Philes’ interpretation must be taken seriously as one of the very few commentaries to come from a contemporary source.²⁰ Philes’ reading of a romance by a fellow Byzantine is,

as I believe Beaton correctly implies, quite different from the sort of criticism Eustathios of Thessalonika performed when he wrote allegorical interpretations of Homer that strike the modern reader as outlandish and that could have had very little to do with the worldview of the ancient bards who composed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Philes was writing about his own culture, and, in the absence of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, we must suppose he understood it better than we do. If Philes' reading is justified, the romance in question is certainly not the only work of medieval fiction to hide a Christian meaning under a secular surface. Allegory was a favorite technique of medieval writers, and they varied in the degree to which they masked a work's underlying meaning. Even a text as seemingly remote from the Christian world as *Beowulf* is in fact filled with Christian symbolism from the hero's descent to a lake of fire, to his agony and desertion by his followers at the ninth hour, through to his death and the funeral rites performed by twelve followers.²¹ If even the king of the Geats is revealed upon close reading to be a Christ figure, like many other characters in medieval literature, we should not dismiss allegorizing readings of Byzantine fiction that claim to find a Christian subtext.

Much of Philes' own work consists of entreaties beseeching the emperor for financial assistance. For this reason, he has sometimes been compared to the author of the *Ptochoprodromika*, yet the similarities between the two authors are actually quite scarce. Philes wrote in a high style, while Ptochoprodromos wrote in a lively style full of colloquialisms.²² We cannot judge how well the learned author imitated the language of the streets, but we cannot mistake the liveliness of the poet's language. Arguments against the authorship of Theodore Prodromos, a known and technically skilled poet, hinge upon the variance in linguistic register, yet such arguments would have us believe the same man could not have written both *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Letters of Samuel Clemens*, or both *The Divine Comedy* and *De vulgari eloquentia*.

Philes' poetic output includes a vast corpus of versification that modern scholarship would tend to classify as "non-literary." He also composed many epigrams that were written as inscriptions to accompany works of visual art. In these poems, we see how the Greek epigram had come full circle, returning to the function it had had in the ancient world and from which its name derives. Manuel Philes is likely to remain one of the Byzantine poets read more for his historical than his literary value. Barry Baldwin has taken a critical view of Philes' poetic abilities. One common approach among today's scholars, in Byzantine studies as well as most others, is to sidestep the issue of who is a "good" poet and who is a "bad" poet altogether, but I do not believe Byzantine literary studies are well served by a dismissal of aesthetic appreciation. As a comparatist who studies medieval Italian as well as Byzantine literature, I have been asked by western medievalists first hearing that such a thing as Byzantine poetry exists, "Is it any good?" In response, I agree with Harold Bloom's position that aesthetic appreciation is supremely important in any discussion of literature, but not with his assertion that "time reduces what is not genius to rubbish."²³ There is nothing to be gained from trying to find a Byzantine Chaucer or Dante, but there are Byzantine poets whose work can still be appreciated for its value as literature.

It has become a recurring motif in Byzantine studies to make disparaging remarks on the poetic abilities of Theodore Metochites. Indeed, when Ihor Ševčenko remarked that Byzantinists too readily take an apologetic tone, he was referring

specifically to the attitude literary scholars express when discussing Metochites' work. I believe that we should heed Ševčenko's advice, but the admission that not every Byzantine poet was a great talent is not an apology but a sign of confidence. If the tradition we study includes Romanos and Mauropous, whose talents only the most antiquated chauvinist could deny, then we may exercise *parrhesia* in assessment of poets who do not command the same admiration.

I have compared Michael Choniates and John Mauropous to the great troubadours not only because their thematic concerns were sometimes similar but also because I believe their literary achievements were of a similar magnitude. Manuel Philes and Theodore Metochites were not of the same poetic caliber, but they are important to literary scholars in that they share with famous western poets of the fourteenth century a conscious interest in self-construction. Fourteenth-century literature in the West is characterized by a degree of introspection far greater than had been seen in any literary work since St Augustine's *Confessions*. Petrarch, the great self-explorer of medieval letters, took the inspiration for his autobiographical enterprise from Augustine himself. In his *Ascent of Mt Ventoux*, he relates a mountaineering excursion he undertook with his brother. At the summit of the mountain, he opened a copy of the *Confessions* packed conveniently for the trip, and read the following: "And men go about admiring the high mountains and the mighty waves of the sea and the wide sweep of the rivers and the sound of the ocean and the movement of the stars, but they themselves they abandon."²⁴

Petrarch used Augustine as a role model for the profound psychological introspection found throughout his work, especially in the *Canzoniere*. Prior to Petrarch's time the *Confessions* had not been one of the more influential of Augustine's work. It does not seem that any western writer in the nearly 900 years between Augustine's time and Petrarch's felt so important as an individual to justify an autobiographical project of such magnitude. The autobiographical emphasis that Petrarch brought to western poetry was not without parallels in Byzantium, although medieval Greek poets did not produce an autobiographical work of comparable scale or complexity to his *Canzoniere*. Notable verse works with distinctively autobiographical features from the fourteenth and late thirteenth centuries include Manuel Philes' *Dialogue of a Man with his Soul*, Theodore Metochites' poems to himself and several works by Stephanos Sachlikes.²⁵

Self-assertion had always been a feature of Byzantine poetry, but the literary self is constructed quite differently in the poems of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries than in earlier periods of the empire's history.²⁶ To take an example from the earliest period of Byzantine literature, we find autobiographical subjects in many poems of Gregory of Nazianzos. In the middle Byzantine period, Christopher of Mytilene and especially John Mauropous place their poetic egos firmly in their epigrams. Yet none of these poets engage in anything like the self-reflection we find in Theodore Metochites. The shift from self-assertion to self-reflection is, I believe, one of the more significant trends in late Byzantine poetry and one that is sure to provide fruitful ground for comparisons with the literary traditions of western Europe, in which increased focus on the self during the late medieval and early modern periods is a familiar topic to scholars.

While there are striking similarities in how notions of the self developed in Byzantium and the West, certain differences between Byzantine and western

constructions of the self should be borne in mind. In fourteenth-century Italian poetry, we find a nascent “cult of the artist,” a celebration of the social outcast who is at odds with his society yet who paradoxically gives it the very words by which it will be remembered.

Early studies of Byzantine literature concentrated primarily on historical questions. Roderick Beaton and Margaret Alexiou are among the pioneering scholars in studying Byzantine poetry primarily for its value as literature. Over the past two decades, they and others have published literary studies devoted to genre analysis, close reading and the application of literary theory to Byzantine texts. It is not surprising that a subject as controversial as literary theory should bring with it a certain amount of contention when it is introduced to Byzantine studies. No field within modern academia has been spared the debate on theory’s validity, and several debates that have not always been amicable have occurred within Byzantine literary studies.²⁷ Margaret Alexiou’s *After Antiquity: Greek Language, Myth, and Metaphor* discusses the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, and other Byzantinists, notably Roilos, have likewise applied Bakhtinian analysis to literary texts.²⁸ I believe it is safe to say that Bakhtin has been more widely discussed by Byzantinists than any other literary critic. While critics have questioned the relevance of Bakhtin to Byzantine letters, the reasons he has been so much discussed are fairly straightforward. Along with Erich Auerbach and Michel Foucault, Bakhtin is one of the literary theorists most concerned with the Middle Ages. If literary theory is to figure at all in the study of Byzantine literature, then it seems inevitable that Bakhtin will continue to be discussed. None of the major literary theorists has been interested in Byzantine texts, so Byzantinists wishing to begin theoretical studies must start somewhere. We must look to theoretical studies of either ancient Greek or medieval western literature and employ a comparative approach in our own work, using scholarship in related fields to examine how the literature of the Byzantines differs from that of their western contemporaries and their ancient predecessors.

The attempt at a comprehensive study of Byzantine poetry undertaken by a western scholar was that of Karl Krumbacher.²⁹ Like Byzantinists before and since, he had to contend with the negative images of Byzantine literature that prevailed since the Enlightenment. Krumbacher argued that a continuum of classical literature could be traced up to the time of Herakleios and that the then-prevalent view that classical literature ended in the fourth century was in error. Prior to Krumbacher, Byzantine verse had its admirers in the West, but they were more often poets than scholars. The most notable was Elizabeth Barrett Browning, whose work *The Greek Christian Poets*, consisting of commentary and translations, was published in 1842 in the periodical *Athenaeum*. Barrett Browning initiated the scholarly topos of apologizing for Byzantine poetry, but her true importance in the history of Byzantine studies is that she was the first western writer of the modern era to attempt a serious poetic rehabilitation and critical reassessment of medieval Greek poetry. After her mandatory disclaimer that, “their place in literature . . . is not, it has been admitted, of the highest,” she went on to make the then-contentious point, “that it was not of the lowest the proof will presently be attempted.”³⁰ Over 160 years later, Barrett Browning remains by far the most accomplished English-language poet ever to translate a large selection of Byzantine poetry. The distinction of her poetry alone should draw more attention from Byzantinists even apart from her critical insights.

One of the greatest challenges currently facing students of Byzantine literature is to overcome the institutional resistance to reading literature as literature. Theoretical matters that would have been widely discussed in other fields of literary study remain unrecognized in Byzantine studies. We may draw an example from the most famous Byzantine literary work, the epic of *Digenes Akrites*. In the Grottaferrata version, book five ends with the hero expressing remorse over sexual excess, and book six begins with him decapitating a serpent who has attempted the very same crime of which the hero is guilty. It is no credit to our discipline that no Byzantinist has yet discussed this clear phallic imagery, or even acknowledged its existence. This is not the place to discuss what the symbolism means, and surely many interpretations will prove to be legitimate as Byzantinists analyze literary matters of the sort that have always concerned scholars of other national literatures.

NOTES

- 1 The most valuable anthology for the student desiring to become more familiar with the Byzantine poetic tradition is Cantarella 1992.
- 2 The present essay will not be devoted to metrics. For a recent, insightful study of meter in Byzantine poetry that is both thorough and concise, the reader is referred to Lauxtermann 1999, which explains in detail the origins of Greek isosyllabic verse in the works of Gregory of Nazianzos (about whose attribution Lauxtermann is cautious) and the Greek translations of Ephrem the Syrian. In this respect, Gregory's poetry could be said to have meaningful similarities to eastern poetry. I believe, important metrical considerations notwithstanding, that Gregory's poetry is an attempt to reconcile Greek culture and Christianity. His work is wholly unlike that of Romanos, who shows very little influence from Greek antiquity despite writing in the Greek language.
- 3 Deferrari 1934: IV, 391.
- 4 Barrett Browning 1863: 171 I have chosen Barrett Browning's translation for its literary merits and because I believe it is important to remember that major English poets have been interested in Byzantine poetry. For a critical edition of Synesios, see Gruber and Strohm 1991.
- 5 Maas and Trypanis 1963: xxii–xxiii.
- 6 Barrett Browning 1863: 187, lines 873–91. George's works have been published in Pertusi 1959. For a bilingual edition of his work with Italian on facing pages, see Tartaglia 1998. Another critical edition, again with Italian translation, is Gonelli 1998.
- 7 Geometres' work is found in PG 106: 812–1002.
- 8 Lauxtermann 2003, especially 118–22. The second volume of this study of Byzantine poetry is eagerly awaited, as the first stops short of Christopher of Mytilene and the other great poets of the mid-eleventh century.
- 9 The fullest treatment of the topic of innovation is found in the essays of the volume edited by Littlewood 1995. An especially helpful contribution is Margaret Mullett's suggestion, indebted to Magdalino 1987, that the Byzantines distinguished between two types of newness – the “neos” and the “kainos,” the former being positive and the latter negative.
- 10 Tolkien 1936.
- 11 Pound 1910: 23.
- 12 The standard critical edition of Maupous' poems is Lagarde and Bollig 1882. The most thorough modern study of his work is Karpozilos 1982.
- 13 The standard edition of Christopher's epigrams is Kurtz 1903.
- 14 Barber and Jenkins 2006.
- 15 Papaioannou presented this work on Narcissus in Psellos at the Dumbarton Oaks colloquium *Byzantine Literature: New Voices and Current Approaches*. The poem, number 5 in Gautier's sequence, is found in Gautier 1986: 131–133.
- 16 It has been persuasively argued that the myth of Echo and Narcissus was the single most important poetic motif of nineteenth-century Europe. The classic study of Narcissus in western literature is Vinge 1967.

- 17 Macrides 1985.
- 18 Roilos 2005: 17.
- 19 Alexiou 2002; Roilos 2005.
- 20 Beaton 1996: 190–2 has a favorable discussion of Philes’ reading. Smith and Agapitos 1992 are critical of both Philes and Beaton. The epigram has been edited and analyzed by Knös 1962.
- 21 Hamilton 1946; McNamee 1960.
- 22 A recent edition of Ptochoprodromos 1991. Philes’ epigrams have been collected in Miller 1855–7, reprinted by Hakkert 1967.
- 23 Bloom 2002: 814.
- 24 Quoted in Musa 1985: 17.
- 25 Metochites’ extended dialogues not simply with “himself” but with different aspects of the self, such as the *psyche*, the *thymos* and the *nous* are unusually introspective for Byzantine poetry. They have been edited by Featherstone 2000. Stephanos Sachlikes’ works are often very autobiographical. Like Metochites, he is preoccupied with his own misfortunes, but his verse is much less philosophical and much more enjoyable. Sachlikes’ poems have been edited by Wagner 1874: 62–105. Philes’ dialogue with his own mind (*nous*), in which other personal faculties and allegorical figures occasionally chime in, is found in Miller 1855: I, 143–84. Manousakas 1972 edits and discusses a dialogue between self and soul by Leonardo Dellaporta. The piece is largely a paraphrase of a work by Ephrem the Syrian, and thus it is notable that Dellaporta, like Petrarch, drew from patristic sources of late antiquity for his introspective works.
- 26 Lauxtermann 2003: 26.
- 27 Smith and Agapitos 1992 were particularly critical of Beaton’s use of theory, which they felt lacked depth.
- 28 Alexiou 2002; Roilos 2005: 227, 230, 243.
- 29 Krumbacher 1897. The standard twentieth-century scholarly history of Byzantine secular literature is Hunger 1978.
- 30 Barrett Browning 1863: 18–19.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE CORPUS OF BYZANTINE HISTORIOGRAPHY

An interpretive essay



Anthony Kaldellis

The political, military and diplomatic history of the middle and late Byzantine empire (roughly AD 610–1453) is known to us largely through the more or less continuous series of extensive narratives composed by about thirty individual historians. While writing within a relatively limited range of generic forms, most of these men (and one woman) turned to history on their own initiative and each wrote in his own manner, reflecting individual biases, access to information and limitations. The comparatively high level of their accuracy and perspicacity has been praised even by scholars who used to disparage other aspects of Byzantine culture, while the total loss of the imperial archives makes their works our most important historical sources. Despite their differences, these works constitute a well-defined corpus. Though one could include political hagiography along with certain imperial orations and even sermons in the broader category of “Byzantine historical writing,” this chapter will discuss the corpus of historiography proper, those texts whose generic coherence has stimulated and accommodated general surveys.¹ While the latter proceed from author to author, this study will look at the overall contours of the corpus, focusing on its coherence and conditions of its formation, its authors, their goals and intellectual resources. It will situate the writing of history at the nexus of literary and political activity in Byzantium and highlight its strengths and weaknesses.

Who were the Byzantine historians? The majority were imperial officials or court orators and hangers-on; one text was possibly authored or co-authored by a reigning emperor (*The Life of Basil I* by Constantine VII) and another by a former emperor (Kantakouzenos). Even if some of these historians were monks at the time that they wrote, still they wrote on the basis of their previous secular careers. Most of our histories are overwhelmingly secular in content and usually also in outlook. In the past, scholars highlighted the distinction between so-called “monkish chronicles” and “classicizing” or “secular histories,” but that distinction is now seen as artificial and unhelpful.² Chronicles of a religious bent certainly did exist, however; the category should not be discarded, and it seems that some Byzantines were broadly aware of the distinction between histories and chronicles.³ The works of George Synkellos and George the Monk focus on biblical and Christian history and do not

cater to those who want to know about Byzantine imperial history. But they were composed in the late eighth and mid-ninth centuries respectively, and had no heirs. Theophanes, on the other hand, who was a monk, continued the work of Synkellos down to 813, and focused on the iconoclastic controversy in which he was personally involved, otherwise offers an annalistic coverage of the history of Byzantium and its neighbors. It was only these authors, then, clustered toward the beginning of our period, who wrote histories that could be called “monkish” in outlook. But this still obscures their great differences: Synkellos was a serious scholar who laboriously coordinated chronological systems, while George the Monk compiled entertaining pious stories in a stream-of-consciousness style that had little regard for chronology.⁴ Neither style was practiced again.

After the end of Iconoclasm, being a monk as such had no bearing on what and how one wrote, as we see in the cases of the court philosopher Psellos, the former civil official Zonaras and the former emperor Kantakouzenos. Their narratives reveal the preoccupations and intellectual interests of their secular careers, specifically (and respectively): to provide a subversive account of the court highlighting Psellos’ own political and intellectual role; to follow Roman history from its beginning to the present; and to justify the deeds of Kantakouzenos himself as emperor. The same is true of historians who were churchmen: Theodosios the Deacon wrote a brief epic poem celebrating Nikephoros Phokas’ conquest of Crete; Leo the Deacon an epic and purely secular narrative of the wars of Nikephoros II and John I Tzimiskes; and Eustathios, the Homerist and bishop of Thessalonika, a heavily classicizing account of the Norman sack of Thessalonika in 1185. There is nothing “ecclesiastical” about the outlook of these works; they were written based on the same secular – that is, classical Greek – education (on which see below).

Even from these bare summaries of their contents we can appreciate how idiosyncratic in subject matter and approach Byzantine historical works could be. There was no single template and no necessary link with one’s career. The most theological historian, Gregoras, was a layman, while Psellos (technically a monk) and Attaleiates (who founded a monastery, albeit in order to protect his property from taxation) were nevertheless hostile to monks in the empire.⁵

Historiography in Byzantium was never dominated by official histories or royal annals despite the relatively stable monarchy and sequence of long dynasties. In fact, it is not entirely clear that we even have histories that were promulgated by the court and that were accepted by society at large, or even by the ruling and literate elites alone, as having some kind of normative authority over their view of history (even if they personally held different views).⁶ “Royal annals” of the kind that recount the history of many ancient Near Eastern kingdoms, or that some medieval courts and religious centers compiled, seem to have been lacking altogether. We do have self-interested narrative histories that were produced at the court, but these, as we will see, had to compete with alternative versions and their success was not – or could not be – enforced through any state mechanism; moreover, they were idiosyncratic in outlook, long or ambitious literary works that could not (and did not) acquire an “official” status.⁷

It was apparently never the function of the Roman government to keep narrative accounts of its own history. This was done by individual authors on their own initiative. Their motives varied, as we might expect, and were mixed in every case.

One was to gain favor with the regime by producing a narrative that cast the current emperor or his ancestors favorably and blackened the memory of opponents of the dynasty (Genesios; Akropolites); another was to criticize past emperors, even if they had benefited the historian himself (Psellos; Attaleiates in a less sarcastic and personal mode); less often it was to criticize, however subtly, reigning emperors (Pachymeres). Some men became historians to justify their own actions in recent crises (Eustathios; Kantakouzenos) or to assert a claim on history after losing the throne (Anna; Kantakouzenos). For many it was to stake a claim to literary fame (Anna is open about this in her preface). Literary culture was a precious thing but not a profession.⁸ In one case the motive was to recount world history in an easy format for aristocrats who needed primers (Manasses). In the most interesting cases, motives were intellectual, for example to explain what went wrong in a period of imperial decline (Attaleiates; Choniates) or to set forth a new intellectual agenda for the court and empire (Psellos).⁹

With few exceptions that were motivated mostly by religious controversy, the treatment of reigning emperors was almost always laudatory, though not necessarily sincere. It is unlikely that Psellos thought highly of Michael VII or Attaleiates of Nikephoros III. Had these authors subsequently expanded their narratives under future emperors, they would have eliminated the panegyrics with which their histories had previously ended and replaced them with more critical accounts, as Choniates seems to have done with the Angeloi dynasty.¹⁰ The treatment of past emperors, however, could be both laudatory and sincere, for example Basil II by Psellos and John II by Choniates. It was generally prudent to bring the work to a close before the accession of the reigning emperor, as the historians of the early empire had done (except Prokopios). It is conceivable that Genesios and Theophanes Continuatus ended their narratives with Basil I so as not to discuss the reign of his son Leo VI, which was full of controversies that directly impinged upon the birth of their imperial patron, Constantine VII. Avoiding the reigning emperor was one way to safeguard integrity and independence, ideals that were affirmed even by historians closely linked to the court.¹¹ Whether these ideals were practiced must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. An effective way of praising the powerful was under the cover of integrity, which thereby became a rhetorical weapon in the arsenal of propaganda. (“Integrity” could be paraded by mixing a slight dose of mild blame in with a lot of praise.)

The praise of an emperor, however, did not necessarily make a history an “official” version. Anna’s heroic narrative of her father Alexios was written long after his death when the princess herself was still fuming at losing the struggle for the succession; her brother John II, whom she criticizes, or his son Manuel I, whom she never mentions, would not have endorsed the *Alexiad*. Likewise, the former emperor Kantakouzenos wrote his history after he had abdicated, when rivals held power at the court. Bitter princesses and defeated emperors had no monopoly on the truth. Neither, apparently, did reigning emperors themselves, as there was no mechanism by which they could, in the contentious political-literary climate of Constantinople, make their version of events normative. The nearest we have to an official history, in the limited sense that it issued from the court, is the series of imperial biographies that were written or commissioned by Constantine VII.¹² Their goal was to present Basil I, the founder of the dynasty and Constantine’s grandfather, as having saved

the state from his heretical, immoral and incompetent predecessors (in the case of Michael III, by murdering him). But alternative traditions were circulating about Basil that were not so flattering, for example in versions of the chronicle of pseudo-Symeon. Emperors had no control over how their propaganda would be received and could not override the polyphony of Byzantine political culture.¹³ Michael III, it seems, had circulated a story about himself that was meant to make him appear pious, but it was ever so slightly twisted by pseudo-Symeon to make him seem unworthy of the throne.¹⁴ One can only imagine the diversity of opinion among the political classes; there were no “masters of truth” about history in Byzantium. Moreover, the histories issued by the court of Constantine VII were subtle literary and narrative creations in their own right, fusing classical and biblical themes, tropes and images. They were not meant to be broadcast to the population and could be fully appreciated only by the same literary elite that was producing and consuming those alternative versions.¹⁵ Perhaps these texts were more a part of the regime’s well-documented ambitions in the scholarly and literary spheres than an (futile) effort to take control of history. Constantine and his ghost-writers were likely activated by the same motives as other Byzantine historians.

The corpus was, then, constituted through a series of personal initiatives. In this sense, we are fortunate that so many learned Byzantines turned their hands to history. Yet it seems that the weight and prestige of the tradition, which, as an inherited and already agglomerated sequence, began in classical antiquity and in the Old Testament, may have inspired some of them to do so. Whatever else they may have thought they were doing, Byzantine historians were often conscious of carrying on a venerable tradition. Nikephoros, writing in the 780s, seems to have decided to continue the history of Theophylaktos, the last historian of antiquity, whose narrative ended in 602. Theophanes continued the chronicle of his mentor George Synkellos down to 813, but in this case the relationship was a personal one. We have at least three continuations of Theophanes: Genesios and Theophanes Continuatus in the tenth century and also John Skylitzes in the late eleventh. Psellos had read Leo the Deacon and picks up where he left off (around 976); whether he intended his own history as a continuation of Leo or not, the two works were placed together in the manuscript with a scribal note linking them that indicated such a relationship. Bryennios (in the early twelfth century) wrote a brief narrative of the rise of Alexios I, then passed his materials to his wife, Anna, who wrote the account of Alexios’ reign. Again, it is not clear whether Choniates, who picks up exactly where Anna leaves off (with the death of Alexios in 1118), intended to “continue” her narrative, given that his view of Alexios was entirely different than her own, but that, in effect, is how the corpus as a whole was gradually constituted for posterity.

But this presentation gives a somewhat misleading picture of the corpus’ uniformity and continuity. In not one instance did a continuator use the same style and format and reflect the same political outlook as had his predecessor. Theophylaktos covers twenty years (582–602) in almost 300 pages of dense Attic prose whereas Nikephoros covers 169 years (602–769) in some seventy pages in a far simpler style. The imperial biographies of Theophanes Continuatus have nothing to do with Theophanes’ annalistic approach; Psellos’ chatty court memoirs are likewise different from Leo’s epic militarism; and Choniates’ bitter irony is worlds apart from Anna’s adulatory eulogy. The corpus, then, was both unified and diverse, in different

respects. That we have four continuations of Theophanes, moreover, indicates that there was no contemporary perception of a single historiographical tradition to which one added an extension; there was insufficient “neutrality” for that in thinking about imperial history. Genesios and Theophanes Continuatus, for example, were written on the basis of a different view of the recent dynastic past than was pseudo-Symeon. Over a century later Skylitzes criticized many of his predecessors for partiality and rewrote the history of the period, albeit reign by reign rather than, like Theophanes, year by year. In addition, the tradition was sometimes invigorated by “fresh starts.” Attaleiates was not continuing the work of any predecessor, not even formally, when he began his narrative in 1034; he chose that date because it suited the logic of imperial decline that he wanted to analyze. Gregoras backtracked to 1204 to begin his work, effectively bypassing Akropolites and Pachymeres who had already covered the years 1204–61 and 1261–1307 (and sometimes offering different versions of the same events).

This system – if it can be called that – of personal initiative and indirect collaboration across the generations had advantages. It presents the course of Byzantine history through a multiplicity of voices and perspectives that often overlapped, usefully for modern historians. A range of subgenres, styles and literary modes were deployed to represent a complex reality. The personal and sometimes autobiographical perspective endowed narratives with immediacy and liveliness.¹⁶ But the system had weaknesses too. If no contemporary decided to write about a certain period, or if those whose works survived wrote later and did not necessarily use (or have available) sufficient contemporary sources, crucial reigns could be poorly represented. This happened to the long reign of Basil II (976–1025), frustrating modern scholars.¹⁷ The ninth century after 813 is covered (for us) by histories written a century later, as is the last century of Byzantium: it was the Fall that inspired a flood of narratives that reached back a century. In addition, what I have been calling the corpus of historiography was never assembled as such in Byzantine times. That began to occur in early modern times, culminating in the early-to-mid-nineteenth-century *Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae* and the twentieth-century *Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae*.¹⁸ As we saw, sequential narratives by different authors could be bundled together in a single manuscript while other manuscripts contained historical miscellanies including both ancient and Byzantine authors. So while nearly all of the latter were aware that they were writing within a prestigious tradition that stretched back on the one side to ancient Greece and on the other to the early Church, each had access to (or knowledge of) only a part of it because it was scattered. The bias was anyway in favor of the classics, for example Kantakouzenos knew Thucydides well but it is doubtful that he knew much about tenth-century historiography.

Despite its heterogeneity, however, and its spasmodic growth, the corpus ultimately does hold together and deserves to be studied as a unity, as a single extended conversation with many voices. This is for two main reasons: first, the continuity of the Roman state and society and, second, the educational system that produced almost all our historians. The “history” in question was that of the Roman empire; even the world chronicles culminated in Roman history after surveying the ancient Near East (in the cases of Zonaras and Manasses relatively quickly, with little attention paid to Greek history, which the Byzantines did not consider to be

“theirs”).¹⁹ Imperial history was sequential and linear; one had only to decide which segment of it to cover, and the segments, as we saw, could be joined together like links in a chain. Most of their parameters remained the same: the capital was Rome and then New Rome, there was always an emperor (possibly facing rivals), a Church (appearing normally only when it was torn by dissent), the instruments of government were roughly the same, the armies were at the frontiers, and the enemies were barbarians, and the historians kept the same ancient names for them (Scythians, Medes, etc.) regardless of who they really were. Conversely, throughout this period the Roman people (whom we call Byzantines) had at all times a single language and religion and a unified government, administration, economy and culture, which meant they could be taken for granted as a coherent collectivity.²⁰ Since, then, the goal of history was not to identify long-term social and cultural change; despite the diversity in the historiographical tradition, most of its component texts dealt mostly with events at the court or capital and with wars on the frontiers (wherever they happened to be in any period). Even narratives as different as those by Psellos and Attaleiates have this at least in common: both men considered themselves historians of the Roman state and people.²¹ This level of coherence had been impossible to attain in ancient Greece, with its warring city-states and kingdoms and ill-defined cultural boundaries, or, for the same reasons, in the Latin West.²² So the *Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae* is in this sense a valid category.

Second, almost all the extant historical texts reflect more or less the same educational curriculum, which instilled in Byzantine authors the ambition, and usually the ability, to write in ancient rather than in vernacular spoken Greek, either in a full-blown Attic idiom or a more accessible *koinē* (closer, that is, to the language of the Church). Within this range there was a variety of registers and individual styles. The language of Theophanes Continuatus and Skylitzes is flat like a newspaper compared to the artful allusiveness of Psellos and the baroque complexity of Eustathios and Choniates. Yet the training behind it all remained relatively stable. It is well known (and often deplored) that educated Byzantines studied rhetoric above all, because it enabled them to deliver speeches at court, to draft documents, and also because the intricacy of its conventions served as a useful benchmark of refinement in a subtle and sophisticated elite society. And rhetorical training – including both the proper grammar and syntax of the high register as well as the technical skills and vocabulary associated with the different modes and tropes – was the crucible of most historiography. It was not merely that the narratives could include speeches, but that every sentence had to be turned in just the right way to have the desired effect within the overall economy of the text. It is here that we can tell the difference between the masters of subtlety and mood such as Psellos and Choniates, and the pompous verbosity of a Genesios; Anna, despite her boasts, seems to have mastered a single trope, something akin to a marching band rhythm (at 1.16.7 she refers to the pace of her narrative as “the horse of history,” probably a stately trot). There are indications that our histories were recited and performed before audiences with the same rhetorical training, which substantially closes the gap between “rhetoric” and “history” (though this aspect remains unexplored).²³

The language of history, moreover, which presupposed a formal training in rhetoric, was not neutral as to the shape and contents of the finished work.²⁴ An excursus on the intellectual resources that enabled these narratives would allow us a

glimpse into the historian's mental workshop. Secular historiography in Byzantium never emerged from the shadow of its classical antecedents. Not only were the classics models of style in their own right, they had largely set the tone for what constituted historical narration. A Byzantine writer aspiring to join the ongoing conversation was sure to emulate their style and format, though we must remember that a diverse set of texts constituted the classical canon to begin with and so variety could be accommodated: imperial biography was inspired by Plutarch; Attaleiates' analysis of Roman decline seems to hark back to Polybios' on Rome's rise; Psellos claimed that his own work mediated between the historians of ancient Rome (Cassius Dio? Dionysios of Halikarnassos?) and "our chronography"; Kantakouzenos seems to have preferred Thucydides (and even wrote about himself in the third person); and Chalkokondyles' ethnography was cast in a Herodotean mold. All this meant that the Byzantine historians were in constant dialogue with their Greek models, albeit not always the same ones. This close relationship was not for show, for they often laced their works with narrative imitations and verbal allusions which, in some cases, were subversive, requiring readers to be alert and discerning.²⁵ It also meant, however, for better or for worse, that "history" was conceived largely as politics and war.

While many histories include ecclesiastical affairs to various degrees (e.g. Psellos almost not at all; Gregoras extensively), they generally cast the Church as another site for political contestation. It is worth noting here Eusebios' faith that Christianity would spell the end of the bloody warfare recounted by the Greek historians and inspire an interest in the more peaceful struggles of the spirit. He was wrong, as even his continuator Socrates noted with dismay a century later. Not only did Byzantine historiography remain "Greek" in this sense, it was the Greek element that absorbed the Christian one. The Byzantines did not continue the tradition of ecclesiastical history (at least not before the fourteenth century). Theophanes' annals and the imperial-biographical approach of his continuators entailed the folding of church history into secular history; in fact, it mandated it, because in practice the patriarch worked for the emperor. It would not have been possible to write an *Ecclesiastical History* like that of Eusebios, at least not without fusing it with some version of Suetonius or Tacitus.

But political-and-military history was never a simple matter and could not itself be represented well apart from a complex combination of generic forms. This posed structural and narratological challenges that many Byzantine writers, driven to display their versatility and rhetorical prowess, eagerly accepted. We should, then, imagine Byzantine historical narrative not as a linear recounting of events but as an uneven textual landscape shaped by the dynamic interplay of a range of generic modes which rhetorical theory treated as distinct. These were studied separately in the abstract and strategically deployed according to need or fancy, but every work of history entailed a different set of combinations, which partly accounts for the diversity that we observe in our texts. These constitutive subgenres included political and battlefield speeches, a rather direct intrusion of performative rhetoric into the narrative which offered historians the opportunity to compose speeches that they would not normally have had occasion to deliver in their capacity as court orators;²⁶ invective and panegyric in the representation of emperors and officials whom political conditions or sound historical judgment required to be blamed or praised (these

were not necessarily separate set-pieces but rather the principles of their composition shaped the mood of the narrative); *ekphraseis* of monuments and gardens could provide delightful digressions from the narrative (e.g. Psellos on the churches of Romanos III and Constantine IX); legal scholarship could also be brought to bear (e.g. Attaleiates' panegyric, albeit ironic, account of Nikephoros III); full-blown laments could be introduced for captured cities (e.g. Thessalonika in 1185; Constantinople in 1204 and 1453); the romance novel inspired amorous scenes in Psellos and Choniates, though the novel's concern with virtue was inverted by them into sinister plots and sexual improprieties. On the Christian side, Gregoras' history is at times a theological treatise. The tropes of hagiography could likewise be deployed to introduce a saintly figure in the narrative (e.g. the patriarch Ignatios in Genesios, a figure lifted directly from hagiography), or endow emperors with a saintly aura (e.g. *The Life of Basil I*).²⁷ Historiography, then, was a site where genres and rhetorical modes met and even collided. For example, Attaleiates' account of Nikephoros III weaves legal history, panegyric and exhortation against a background of subtle sarcasm, while Psellos maintains a dynamic tension between the propagandistic aspects of rhetoric (which he acknowledges) and the veracity required by sound history.²⁸

I have omitted one major compositional mode of ancient historiography, namely ethnography, because it suffered an inexplicable decline in the middle Byzantine period (and one that has been little noticed and commented upon in the scholarship). Ethnography had flourished in late antiquity. Considering the works of Priskos, Prokopios, Agathias and Theophylaktos, we may conclude that it was even deemed an essential component of any historical work. And yet while we may know the layout, contents and inhabitants of Attila's tent, middle Byzantine historiography barely records the names of the leaders of the empire's enemies, and often not even that, and far less any information about their people's customs. The light of history shone brightly upon the empire itself but almost all beyond its frontiers remained in the dark. Slavs and Arabs sometimes appear as generic "enemies of Christ" and no more. It is not as though there were no "new people" in this period to match the great movements of late antiquity; moreover, we know that the Byzantine court and its functionaries and diplomats possessed a great deal of information about foreign peoples and states. Somehow, however, for reasons that remain obscure, that information did not end up in the histories. There are brief notices about the Pechenegs in Psellos and Attaleiates, perhaps a page long, and some perceptive information about Central Asia in Bryennios, but for fuller ethnographies we have to wait for the historians of the Fall, especially Chalkokondyles, who emulated Herodotos.

These, in brief, were the generic resources by which Byzantine historians crafted narratives. Many were formally discrete tropes that they learned during the course of their rhetorical education. Against modern objections that history should not be rhetorical, it should be pointed out that rhetorical education in Byzantium, as in the earlier Roman empire, was heavily historical to begin with. Students practiced composing declamations with a historical premise and wrote exercises (*progymnasmata*) that required them to speak through the mouth of a figure from mythology or ancient history. This taught them perspective (among other skills as well). Rhetorical composition defined the different styles ("grave," "pompous," etc.) that were most appropriate for different narrative moments. Rhetorical education was indirectly

a training for historiography;²⁹ conversely, the writing of history enabled these educated Byzantines to exercise and display more of their rhetorical skills than probably any other mode of discourse. This partly explains why so many of them did so when it was not required for any of their careers (unlike the delivery of panegyric speeches). They wrote history as much for pleasure as for acclaim. It enabled them to judge the mighty and the past, to be philosophical, martial, pious, moralistic, hortatory, subversive and entertaining, all sometimes in the same text. They could be Homeric in genuine admiration (Anna on Alexios) or in ironic subversion (Eustathios and Choniates on the Komnenoi).³⁰

* * *

Let us step back now and consider different ways of reading these texts. Much depends on whether we approach them as historians looking for information or as students of literature trying to understand their often subtle representation of the world, though the two perspectives invariably lead into one another (for all that they have not been developed equally in the scholarship).

A prosopography of those who appear in the histories would reveal that they are inhabited mostly by emperors and their wives, generals, leading officials of the state, courtiers and top ecclesiastics. This is a world of elite men, reflecting the gender and status of the historians themselves (one woman among them, and she a princess) and their intended readers. More average Byzantines do appear from time to time, either individually or, as in the case of the Constantinopolitan “mob,” in groups, but they are often anonymous and appear either because their actions affect elite narratives or because their stories have the right Herodotean credentials. Byzantinists seeking information about daily life have mostly turned to hagiography. So too regarding geography. The spotlight falls on the capital and the frontiers (or wherever the armies were active), leaving out the majority of the empire’s territory, where there was usually little exciting going on. So the histories can be said to focus on what was exceptional and in this way they are unrepresentative of life in the empire for the majority of its subjects (as local news reports are in the US). Constantinople was no ordinary city and the frontiers were often turbulent places, giving, if we were to rely on the histories alone, a rather misleading impression of Byzantium as a whole: not all provinces were frontiers. It is not until the late eleventh and twelfth centuries that the histories focus upon central Asia Minor, because that was when it began to be raided and settled by Turks; they do not cover western Asia Minor or Greece until the thirteenth century. Thessalonika would seem to be an exception to this rule, considering the military narratives in the *Miracles of Saint Demetrios* (in large measure a historical text), and the siege-and-capture accounts of Kaminiates (for 904), Eustathios (1185) and Anagnostes (1430). But not only was Thessalonika an exceptional city to begin with, more like Constantinople than, say, Naupaktos, and often on the empire’s frontier (facing the Slavs or the Arab raiders of the Aegean), its presence in these texts conforms to the general conclusions stated above. We know little of life there when it was not being besieged.

There was, then, a Constantinopolitan bias, which comes as no surprise, given that most historians were active there. And given the kind of history that they set out to write it made sense for them to be there: Constantinople was the center of all information about Europe and the Near East. It was where decisions were made,

where officials deposited their reports and where key participants in events could be contacted (and if they could not be interviewed, their retainers, who had seen the same action, sometimes from a better perspective, might be). Constantinople was also where the audience that historians sought to impress resided. So there is nothing unusual about this slant in their information and outlook. There was an even more exclusive level of reporting. Many episodes of intrigue and murder in Theophanes Continuatus (for example) could be followed only by someone who had intimate familiarity with the palace layout.³¹

In the past it was insufficiently appreciated just how much we are at the mercy of each individual author for our “facts” about Byzantine history. Their annalistic or reign-by-reign organization along with their sequencing created the illusion of smooth continuity and even interchangeability, but we must resist this perception and the use of the texts as sources that it entails. For all that they were part of the same tradition in the ways discussed above, these historians were not equivalent in the way that they reported on events. Psellos gives few dates and is coy about the identity of the men he was writing about, few of whom he names, leaving us with a hazy narrative of personalities. He says almost nothing about military matters. Anna’s purpose was to make her father seem like a hero and to that end she distorted or lied about the order of certain events; what seemed to be a solid source is now unraveling under critical scrutiny.³² The rules change as we move from one text to another. And what are we to do when two serious and otherwise reliable historians writing about the same period (say, Pachymeres and Gregoras) give different versions of the same event and they are our only sources for that event? To cope with these problems, we must study each text closely on its own terms – to uncover what I just called its “rules” – with the same attention that has traditionally been paid to the ancient historians. Byzantinists have much to learn from classicists in this matter, for the one tradition evolved directly out of the other and never lost touch with it.

This brings us to the thorny issue of reading historical texts not merely as sources but as “literature,” which is now widely recognized as necessary though exactly what it means is still vague.³³ Specifically, it is not clear in what sense Byzantine texts, even the romance novels, constitute what we might recognize as literature – and what *do* we mean by *literature*? Moreover, the broader problem of the intersection of historiography and literature has not been resolved today at the most theoretical levels of inquiry. It might be possible to bypass this semantic obstacle by substituting the term “rhetoric” for that of “literature,” given, as we saw, that these texts were rhetorical at every level. Unfortunately, that term has been imbued with negative albeit largely unfair connotations, especially in regard to Byzantine texts. If it were possible to agree that the “rhetoric” of the Byzantine histories is what makes them (a) enjoyable to hear (in the original) and read; (b) persuasive in their representation of people, events and periods; and (c) intellectually insightful and stimulating with regard to their basic themes, then we could probably dispense with the term “literature” without, however, at the same time dispensing with the problem of fictionality that “literature” inevitably poses. This is because the discipline of rhetoric in Byzantium included a training in many of the devices of fictionality of which the historians also made good use. Like their ancient counterparts, they invented speeches for their characters and sometimes invented or transposed the characters themselves for dramatic effect,³⁴ and an episode that was factually untrue could still

point to a deeper truth that a historian wanted to develop as a theme during the course of his narrative; in fact, it could point to this truth with more clarity than a factual episode.³⁵

It would be incredible to believe that historians writing in such different intellectual and social contexts, for such different audiences, would have shared the goals and standards of modern scholars. I am not implying that they would have wanted to do so had they been aware of them, or that they tried and failed, but that they understood the value and nature of history in different ways. The purpose of the *Life of Basil I* was to mythologize its hero by surrounding him with classical and biblical associations. This is easy to see on the surface, but how extensively and deeply does this imperative shape the details of the text? It has been proposed through a close literary reading that the figure of the rich widow Danielis who assisted Basil in his rise to power might after all be a fiction, which promotes those very associations.³⁶ Psellos casts the death of Romanos III in the palace baths as a failed baptism that hastened the emperor on his way down to Hades rather than raising him up from it.³⁷ Choniates' Andronikos Komnenos is cast in the mold of Homer's Odysseus, but he alternates between heroic and anti-heroic comparisons, part of the historian's broader project to represent the history of his time as one of reversal and constant paradox.³⁸ What are scholars to make of all this?

Clearly, these images and comparisons have little to do with representing historical truth in the way a modern historian would. There are other goals at work here, themes addressed to audiences who were looking for more than just the facts (or who knew the facts and did not need or want to be told them again). Granted, it matters little exactly how Romanos III died and what he thought he was doing when he entered the baths that day and how ironic it was how things turned out for him . . . on the other hand, quite a lot of Byzantine social history has been shouldered by Danielis. And Choniates' representation of Andronikos, by far the most important one we have, is central to any reconstruction of that crucial reign. All this does make the task of modern historians using these texts as sources more difficult, but that cannot be helped. There is exciting work to be done both in sifting through the histories' factual value and in appreciating what else they have to tell us, for, after all, the Byzantine historians were for the most part an intelligent, thoughtful, diverse and creative group of writers.

NOTES

- 1 Hunger 1978, I; Karpozilos 1997–2002. Treadgold 2007 promises sequels on the middle and late Byzantine historians.
- 2 E.g. Afinogenov 1992 comparing George the Monk and John Zonaras; Ljubarskij 1993 on the state of the field, citing previous scholarship; Holmes 2005: 172–85 on Skylitzes.
- 3 Karpozilos 1997–2002: II, 30–2.
- 4 Kazhdan 2006: II, 43–52.
- 5 Kaldellis 2007: 213, 254.
- 6 Cf. Shepard 2003.
- 7 Howard-Johnson 1994 has argued for an official history of the campaigns of Heraclius based on staff paperwork, but this was before our period and written in unique circumstances (see esp. 70). The conclusion that it was an unparalleled hybrid of prose and verse written by George of Pisidia depends on speculative reasoning.
- 8 Mazzucchi 1978: 271.

- 9 Odorico 2006 has also emphasized the practical, immediate goals that works of history were meant to accomplish.
- 10 Simpson 2006.
- 11 Simpson 2006: 203–4.
- 12 For Constantine VII and the question of authorship, see I. Ševčenko 1992.
- 13 See Angold in this volume.
- 14 Nilsson and Scott 2007: 327.
- 15 E.g. Anagnostakis 1989.
- 16 For the historian in the history, see Macrides 1996.
- 17 Holmes 2005 copes with this problem.
- 18 See Reinsch in this volume.
- 19 Cf. Jeffreys 1979.
- 20 Kaldellis 2007: 42–119 on the Roman national identity of Byzantium.
- 21 This is independent of the question of the mutual influence among Byzantine (Roman) and Near Eastern (Syriac and Arabic) historiographical traditions, on which see Holmes 2005.
- 22 Davidson 2007: 5: “This phenomenal cultural diversity of ancient Greece is one reason why Greek history is so complicated – and why books for general readers on the Hellenic world are so much rarer than books about Rome. Rome is at least a single political entity.”
- 23 In general, Cavallo 2006: 47, 50; also Munitiz 2004. Eustathios’ *Capture of Thessalonika* is cast in the form of a sermon.
- 24 For new readings of the rhetoric of Byzantine literature, see Jeffreys 2003.
- 25 Moravcsik 1966; Hunger 1969–70; Kaldellis 2004: 17–61.
- 26 Cf. Hoffmann 2007 on Leo the Deacon.
- 27 Alexander 1940.
- 28 Kaldellis 1999: 127–54.
- 29 Gibson 2004.
- 30 Sarris 1995–7.
- 31 Featherstone 2009. See also Featherstone in this volume.
- 32 Frankopan 2005.
- 33 Preliminary discussions in Ljubarskij 1998; Odorico *et al.* 2006; Kazhdan 2006: II; Macrides 2009.
- 34 E.g. Efthymiades 2008 on the figure of Thomas in Choniates.
- 35 Cf. Kaldellis 1999 and 2004.
- 36 Anagnostakis 1989.
- 37 Efthymiades 2005.
- 38 Kaldellis 2009.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

CHRISTIANS, JEWS AND MUSLIMS IN BYZANTINE ITALY

Medieval conflicts in local perspective



Youval Rotman

INTRODUCTION

Sicily and southern Italy hold a special place in the history of the Byzantine empire. Thanks to their geographic situation as middle Byzantium's most western regions,¹ separated from the Balkan mainland by the Adriatic Sea, they could well be considered a peripheral region. In what follows I will subject this to scrutiny. Much has been written over the past two decades on center-periphery relationships in matters of society, economy and most of all culture. I would like to examine the definition of Byzantine Italy and Sicily as a peripheral region in view of the special place that this region held on the general medieval map. I shall avoid, therefore, the definition of a periphery in relation to a center by focusing here not on the relations between Constantinople and Italy/Sicily, but on the particularities of the southern Italian and Sicilian region and the way in which they were perceived by the local population.

The lands of the region in question included Sicily, Calabria, Apulia, Lucania/Basilicata and Campania, all of which were brought under the sway of Constantinople in the sixth century by Justinian's military enterprise. The seventh and eighth centuries witnessed a growing Lombard presence in southern Italy.² Following the Iconoclastic crisis in the eighth century, and the new pro-Carolingian policy of the papacy, Rome and Constantinople did not see eye to eye.³ The local Greek population found itself part of the Byzantine empire, but enjoyed increasing religious influences from Rome. In the eighth and ninth centuries, Constantinople and Rome competed between themselves for political and religious influence in the region, part of which had passed from Rome's jurisdiction to Constantinople's.⁴ The Carolingian-Roman pact manifested in the coronation of Charlemagne as emperor by Pope Leo III in the year 800 increased the impact that this conflict had in the South, and made Rome more influential at the expense of Constantinople.⁵ Another consequence of the Carolingian presence in Italy was the independence of Lombard Benevento.⁶ This political constellation, which had also a religious dimension to it (with communities oriented toward Constantinople or toward Rome), became even more complex in the ninth century, following the arrival of Islam in the region.

The Arabs got their first hold in Sicily in 827, and arrived in the Adriatic ten years later.⁷ By the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth, they had completed the conquest of Sicily and were making continuous attacks on Calabria. In 918 they captured Reggio. Their presence was of major concern to Byzantium, since Arab forces in the Adriatic endangered the Byzantine domination of this part of the Mediterranean and deprived Byzantium of access to its Italian territories. Battles between the two powers continued in the region throughout the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries. The Arab forces that appeared in the region did not always act on behalf of a single political authority. The emirate of Bari, for instance, acted as an independent principality.⁸ The same was also true for the Lombard principalities.⁹ During this period, the frontiers between the Byzantine, Lombard and Arab states were in constant flux, sometimes to the advantage of the Byzantines, who succeeded in resuming their Adriatic hegemony and their hold on part of their Italian territories in the tenth century. In the eleventh century a new political force appeared in southern Italy, the Normans. By the twelfth century they had conquered all Byzantine and Arab territories in Calabria, Apulia, Basilicata and Sicily and reorganized the entire region in the framework of a single independent kingdom.

Between the eighth and the eleventh centuries, therefore, southern Italy and Sicily were the scene of constant political conflicts. These were also religious conflicts, since each of the forces in question had a different medieval religious agenda. The different religious communities of the region – the Orthodox who were faithful to Constantinople, Roman Catholics and Muslims – met yet a fourth medieval religious culture, Judaism. Present in the region since antiquity, Jewish communities were now spread all over southern Italy and Sicily. Though not forming a polity, the local Jewish communities were connected to the great yeshivas of Palestine and Mesopotamia/‘Babylonia’ (modern Iraq) and played their part in the formation of a wider medieval Jewish culture.¹⁰

Sicily and southern Italy was the only region in the medieval world where all four medieval cultures met. However, the different religious communities which coexisted there were in constant political and religious conflict. In what follows, therefore, I will examine conflict, focusing not on the way the Byzantines viewed their Italian territories and the local population, but on the way the local population perceived itself in relation to its local religious and political context, most notably through religious and moralizing literary production: local hagiography. Such an analysis of the local literary production will help to address whether the population of the region saw itself as related to the Byzantine political and cultural center, or whether it was mainly concerned with local issues. The question of whether Byzantine Italy was more Byzantine or more Italian is, naturally, impossible to answer fully. However, an answer can be attempted by analyzing the ways in which its population perceived its particular political-religious situation.

CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RIVALRY IN LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

The representation of religious conflicts in the hagiography of southern Italy in the eighth and ninth centuries has been dealt with by Evelyn Patlagean and Augusta Acconcia Longo, and Stéphanos Efthymiades has dealt with the tenth and eleventh centuries.¹¹ Both Patlagean and Acconcia Longo analyze the literature concerning the

local Sicilian dioceses in the eighth and ninth centuries in the light of the major religious event of the period: the iconoclastic crisis. Both take this literature as important evidence of the concerns that touch the region in the period that saw the Sicilian and Calabrese dioceses passing under the patriarchal jurisdiction of Constantinople. Patlagean reads the hagiography of the Sicilian bishops, written at this time, as part of the Roman propaganda intended to bring the local Greek communities into the Roman orbit of influence. Acconcia Longo, on the other hand, identifies in some of the same hagiographic texts (and others) religious and political trends that could well testify to an inclination toward Constantinople.

For both historians the different references to Constantinople, the emperor and the patriarch on the one hand, and to Rome and the pope on the other, are indications of the religious trends in a region that finds itself between two opposing centers of religious influence during the iconoclastic crisis. It is important to state that almost all of these references are slight.¹² No text places Rome and Constantinople explicitly in confrontation, and none refers directly to the iconoclastic conflict. In this they are very different from texts from other parts of the empire, which present a definite conflict over icon veneration in polemical tones.¹³ Nevertheless, the lack of explicit references to Iconoclasm does not exclude its presence as a pivotal event that divided the region between Orthodoxy according to Constantinople, and emerging Catholicism according to Rome.

The *Life* of Pankratios of Taormina opens a tenth-century manuscript dedicated almost exclusively to Sicilian saints, all of whom are from eastern Sicilian dioceses: Pankratios of Taormina, Markianos of Syracuse, Agathon of Lipari and Alphios, Filadelhios and Quirinos, the three martyrs of Lentini.¹⁴ Copied in 964, *Vat. gr. 1591* is the earliest source for these texts, and is considered to be a creation of the Rossano region in Calabria.¹⁵ The fact that Theodore Stoudite refers to the *Life* of Pankratios of Taormina in his defense of icons in three of his letters is well known.¹⁶ The text is preserved in twelve manuscripts. The six manuscripts of the first recension were edited by Cynthia Stallman-Pacitti in her unpublished dissertation “The Life of S. Pancratius of Taormina.”

The icon is indeed present in the text. The *Life* narrates the Christian mission with which Peter charges Pankratios and Markianos in order to Christianize Sicily. Pankratios is sent to Taormina, Markianos to Syracuse. Both are armed with icons and crosses. Peter orders Joseph the painter to copy the icon of Christ in his possession, and to prepare two more icons depicting himself and Pankratios.¹⁷ Pankratios carries the icons with him, and uses them in his miracles, but the iconoclastic crisis in itself is not mentioned directly.¹⁸ The two saints combat the local pagan priests, destroy the pagan temples and convert the local pagan population. Acconcia Longo has demonstrated how this assimilation of the local pagans with the Christians portrays an iconodule propaganda against iconoclast accusation of idolatry. She has shown how the *Life* of Pankratios could well be read as an iconodule reply to the *Life* of Leon of Catania, where the mage Heliodoros would originally have been an iconodule figure.¹⁹ The battle between the saint’s magic forces and the local non-Christian magical forces symbolizes, therefore, the iconoclastic–iconodule conflict. In the *Life* of Pankratios, it is the saint himself who is charged with magical powers, thanks to which he manages to destroy the pagan idols and temples, and converts the local pagans.

There are, however, other local idolaters whom the saint does not manage to convert. These are the Jews and the Montanists, who combine forces with Taormina's *archon* and fight Pankratios. They organize an orgy and order two Christian virgins, Pankratios' deaconesses, to attend. The newly Christianized community, enraged by the decapitation of the two maidens, is led by the saint waging war against both Jews and Montanists, which ends in the drowning of the latter outside the city's port.²⁰ This representation of the Montanists, who are otherwise unknown in the region, and the Jews, has no further particulars except for the fact that both communities are presented as idolaters. This is manifested by their religious practices described throughout the text.²¹

The representation of the Jews as sorcerers is, of course, a topos in Christian texts.²² However, their representation as idolaters is quite unusual.²³ This, combined with the probably fictitious local Montanist community, suggests an iconodule argument against the iconoclastic accusation of idolatry.²⁴ The representation of the Jews as such would then be a contra-iconoclast argument. For this purpose, the Jewish and Montanist figures are completely fictional. Indeed, "the faith of the Jews" (*h pistis ton Ioudaion*) is portrayed here as disconnected from biblical Judaism. The Jews are described as polytheists, worshippers of the Golden Calf, and since they are here called *oi Ioudaioi* (in contrast to the biblical *to laos tou Israel*), they are clearly differentiated from the biblical narrative.²⁵

The author uses exactly the same description of idolaters and polytheists for the Jews of Syracuse too.²⁶ Here the *Life* of Pankratios indeed serves as an iconoclast mirror to the *Life* of Leon of Catania, where the Jew summons up Satan using sorcery. While idolatry is used in the *Life* of Leon of Catania as part of an iconoclastic accusation against iconodules, its attribution to the Jews and Montanists in the *Life* of Pankratios could well be an iconodule contra-argument. In other words, the Jews and Montanists are being used in the text as part of an iconodule statement, so as to lay the iconoclasts' accusation of idolatry on others, in contrast to the holy magic that Pankratios and Markianos perform.²⁷ The icons are therefore not the only reference in the text to the iconoclast conflict. Moreover, the religious conflict of the time is presented on the basis of another religious conflict, the conflict between the Jews and the Christians.

The political conflict in the region at that time is also presented by the author of the *Life* using a completely different conflict. By the end of the eighth century, the Lombards had occupied most of the Byzantine territories in Apulia, Lucania and part of Calabria.²⁸ In the *Life* of Pankratios the Lombard presence in Calabria is made incarnate in the figure of the mighty Remaldos "of the blond race," who, together with Akulinos, "Calabria's king," had conquered the entire southern coast down to the Salento.²⁹ Evagrius, Pankratios' disciple and the author of his *Life*, reads from "the history book" how Remaldos adopted Tauros (one of the two founders of the city of Taormina). The author narrates the entire mythology of the region, but contextualizes the history of Taormina, not in the history of Sicily, but in that of Calabria. Moreover, this mythology is presented as the historical context of political events contemporary with Pankratios: Akulinos' descendant (also named Akulinos) prepares an invasion of 600,000 men from Calabria to conquer Taormina. Pankratios, who learns about this plan in a dream, warns Bonifatios, the *hegemon* of Taormina, but recommends no military preparation.³⁰ "It is that war, the invasion of

Akulinos' fathers, that I want now to revenge," he says to the *hegemon*. The saint then defeats the Calabrian soldiers by the power of the cross and the icon of Christ, "in the same manner that Joshua conquered Jericho."³¹ Once the saint has repulsed the Calabrese attack, he converts the Calabrese soldiers. He ordains a few of them priests and deacons, and sends them back to convert Calabria "before Peter passed through Ravenna and ordained Stephanos sending him to Reggio."³² This is a clear indication of the political and religious aspirations of the author of the *Life*: Taormina is presented not only as the first base of Christianity in Sicily, but also the first in Calabria. Moreover, Pankratios' presence in Italy even preceded Peter (who according to the opening of the *Life* had sent Pankratios from the East and only later arrived in Rome).³³

The general religious and political context does not interest the local hagiographer for itself. His objective is to build a case for the primacy of Taormina, which has to be portrayed as iconodule and victorious. The author makes use of the Christian-Jewish conflict, much as he uses the local political rivalries between Lombard Calabria and Byzantine Sicily. Neither conflict interests him in itself. This could explain why the *Life* of Pankratios does not exhibit a clear iconoclast agenda. Iconoclasm is not the main issue here. The *Life* was written according to a completely local Sicilian agenda, where the religious enemy, whether iconoclast or iconodule, is portrayed in the figure of the Jew. This enemy can, nevertheless, be converted to Orthodoxy.

The same *Vat. gr. 1591* contains a hagiographic cycle (*BHG* 57–62) dedicated to the three martyrs of Lentini: Alphios, Philadelphios and Quirinius.³⁴ The last story attributed to them narrates the conversion of the rabbi and part of the Jewish community of Lentini to Christianity by the miraculous post-mortem intervention of the three martyrs. The figure of the Jew who acknowledges the falsity of his faith and converts to Christianity is, of course, a hagiographic topos.³⁵ But as Maria Vittoria Strazzeri has recently shown, here there is some reason to argue that the story is based on a historical conversion of part of a Jewish local community. She dates the story to the second half of the seventh century (649–98) and sees references in it to both the Monothelite heresy, and the forced baptism that took place during the reign of Herakleios.³⁶

In this story, Samuel has been stricken with a serious case of leprosy which has lasted for twenty-two years. His wife Shoshana goes to seek advice from a wise woman. The latter recommends the Christian faith as a remedy, which Shoshana, naturally, refuses to accept. In the meantime Samuel has a revelation. The three martyrs of the city visit him in his dream, and cure his right hand of leprosy. They advise him to go to Thekla if he wants to be completely cured. When he wakes up, Samuel orders his sons and daughters to carry him to Thekla's house. There, at midnight, the martyrs put on flesh mysteriously and cure him. When he wakes up healed he immediately renounces Judaism, and so do his children. But the Jewish community will not accept the loss of their rabbi. They go directly to Thekla's house and demand to have their rabbi back: "What have you done to us, O *kyria* Thekla!" they cry, "Why did you take our father and leave us, like a herd without a shepherd, orphans?" Samuel then steps out from Thekla's house and confronts the Jews, who claim the miracle to be the divine providence of their gods (*oi theoi hmon*) "whom the emperors used to worship." This is the third time in the text that the Jews are

portrayed as polytheists. In the second part of the story, the martyrs save Samuel together with a large group of men buried alive, a miracle which convinces more Jews (yet not all of them) to convert.

The text offers a detailed description of a Jewish community, probably of a seventh- or eighth-century Sicilian town. Both the Jewish and the Christian communities are portrayed as equals in their size, in their actions and in the dialogue between them. Unlike the Jews in the *Life* of Pankratios, the Jewish community of Lentini is not portrayed as a real threat to Christianity, but as its local rival. The story is a story of a rivalry between the two communities and between the two religions. In order to change this balance, the conversion of the rabbi is required. The representation of the Jewish faith as polytheism, which we also saw in the *Life* of Pankratios, points here to the new place Judaism has acquired: Jews are now playing the role once attributed to pagans, that is, they are destined for conversion.³⁷

In both hagiographies, the one dedicated to Pankratios and Markianos, and the one dedicated to the martyrs of Lentini, we find that the Jewish presence in Sicily is presented as a challenge to Orthodoxy.³⁸ Incarnating either idolatry or polytheism, the Jews are destined for destruction or conversion, both of which would symbolize the victory of Orthodoxy. In this the Greek Italian hagiographers are not different from hagiographers elsewhere in the empire. However, they make use of this rivalry in order to present contemporary conflicts in local perspective. This becomes evident once a new religion appears in the region: Islam.

CHRISTIAN–MUSLIM RIVALRY IN LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

We have seen that hagiographers in the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth century made the slightest of references to the political and religious circumstances disturbing the empire.³⁹ This “hagiographic strategy,” which was apparent in the use it made of the figure of the Jew, completely changed once Islam began to play a leading political role in the region. According to Aldo Messina, the hagiographic cycle that we find in *Vat. gr. 1591* was composed in the first half of the tenth century, so close to the date that the manuscript was copied in the monastery community of S. Filippo di Fragalà in Sicily. It expresses nostalgia for the period of Greek Christianity in Sicily, in view of the Arab conquest of Sicily.⁴⁰ However, this theory does not hold for local hagiography written in Calabria in the tenth to eleventh centuries in light of the Arab presence in Sicily and Italy.⁴¹

Most of the *Lives* described and analyzed by Da Costa Louillet, and which refer to this last phase in the history of Byzantine rule in Italy, are, in contrast to earlier *Lives*, relatively easy to date.⁴² If we follow Caruso’s division between “historical” and “unhistorical” hagiographies, all of the later *Lives* fall within the first category.⁴³ This is mainly due to the information that they give about political events. In contrast to local hagiographers writing before the advent of the Arabs, who do not provide explicit references to contemporary events, the hagiographers of the tenth to eleventh centuries contextualize the saint’s activities in the local political reality. The Arab invasions and conquests are explicitly mentioned throughout the texts, along with other political forces, such as the Lombards and the Germans, as well as several Byzantine leaders. This serves the hagiographer’s objective of portraying the saint as

a political figure. For this purpose it is essential to depict the saint on the background of contemporary political reality, rather than of a mythological or legendary past.

The *Life* of Elias the Younger, the *Life* of Elias the Cave-dweller (*spelaiotes*), the *Life* of Vitalis, the *Life* of Sabas the Younger, the *Life* of Luc of Demena and the *Life* of Nil of Rossano are all products of Byzantine Calabria, and all were written when Sicily was already under Aghlabid rule and Calabria was a target for Arab raids. Historians have noted that all of these *Lives* are dedicated to monks, in contrast to the *Lives* written in Byzantine Italy prior to the coming of the Arabs, in which the saint is often a local bishop. This difference corresponds to the new role that monasteries began to play in the region, as foci of protection for the local inhabitants.⁴⁴

There is, however, another significant quality that sets these saints apart: they were all born in the region. In contrast to earlier saints who came to Sicily from the east and the north, the saints of the ninth to the eleventh century were all natives, who, if they travel, always return to southern Italy. The native Sicilians among them, such as Elias the Younger, Leo-Luc of Corelione or Sabas the Younger, move around Sicily, before they turn to Calabria.⁴⁵ The *Life* of Elias the Younger, for example, which is dated by its editor to the 930s or 940s, testifies to the gradual Arab conquest of Sicily. Elias himself is captured twice by Arab raiders. His destiny leads him on a Mediterranean journey to Ifriqiya, Egypt, Palestine and back through North Africa to Italy, where he becomes known for his prophetic capacities.⁴⁶ He is able to foresee the Arab attacks and becomes famous throughout the empire.⁴⁷ His journeys lead him to Epirus, the Peloponnese and Thessalonika.⁴⁸ He becomes known to Emperor Leo VI, and is asked to pray for the safety and salvation of the empire. He is even invited to Constantinople, but dies on his journey.⁴⁹

In fact, not one of these saints gets to Constantinople, and the city itself is very rarely mentioned. Nil of Rossano explicitly refuses an invitation to go there.⁵⁰ Unlike Constantinople, Rome is frequently present. All of these saints go to Rome on pilgrimage and meet the pope, who is not, however, always presented as the supreme authority. Nil of Rossano, for instance, intervenes out of his own initiative in the matter of the antipope John Philagathos, and refuses to take Otto III's side.⁵¹ It is his disciple, Bartholomew, who meets the antipope, and makes him renounce his position by excommunicating him.⁵² This is a clear indication of the religious authority that the authors attribute to the local saint, an authority which is recognized by both Rome and Constantinople. In other words, the Byzantine saints of southern Italy are not secondary to either Rome or Constantinople.⁵³ Their fame makes them known as such outside the region as well.⁵⁴

All of these *Lives* refer to the Arab invasions and the difficulties that the local population encountered. As the protector and guardian of the local community, the saint was able to predict the invasion and forewarn the locals.⁵⁵ This also makes him indispensable for the Byzantine military commanders.⁵⁶ Thus Elias the Younger is visited by the commander of the Byzantine navy and gets specific instructions for his soldiers to fast and pray, in order to defeat the Arab navy.⁵⁷ The saint acquires such an important local influence in political matters that the Byzantine governors need his help in other matters as well. Nil of Rossano manages to appease the inhabitants of Rossano, who burn ships and kill their commanders as a response to the governor's dictates.⁵⁸ When there is a threat of German invasion from the north, Romanos, the Byzantine commander of Italy, asks Sabas to negotiate with the "Franks' king"

(Otto II) and to reach an accord in order to stop the forthcoming German attack.⁵⁹ Sabas is depicted by his hagiographer, Orestes the patriarch of Jerusalem, as a figure who plays a key role in the politics of Italy between the Byzantines, the Lombards and the Germans. Sabas manages to convince the same German king (*rex ton Fragkon*) to release the son of the prince of Salerno whom he took as hostage.⁶⁰ He is also approached by the prince of Amalfi, who implores him to do the same for his son.⁶¹

The special political constellation of southern Italy in this period, which was composed of different and often hostile political forces, demanded a new type of saint who would play the mediator and resolve political conflicts. The saint sometimes acts as the political military leader himself. Elias the Younger is described by his hagiographer as the one who had killed the Arab leader Ibrâhim (*Brakhimos* in the Greek text) whose objective was to seize Constantinople.⁶² Both Luc of Demena and Vitalis confront the Arab forces by themselves, the first armed with the cross, the second with a sword (but using the sign of the cross all the same).⁶³ In fact, the two *Lives* do not mention any other Byzantine political or military leader. The saint plays that role, and succeeds where the Byzantine ruler fails: he brings protection and calm to the local inhabitants. The local community no longer presents an outsider as its leader, but a native.

In contrast to earlier *Lives*, the Jews are hardly mentioned in the hagiographic texts from the Arab period. *A priori* the Christian–Muslim conflict has taken over the place of the Christian–Jewish conflict. However, the two rivalries are not presented on the same level. The Christian–Jewish conflict is presented as an entirely internal Byzantine religious affair, and is used by the hagiographer to portray other internal conflicts that disturb Byzantine society. The Muslims, on the other hand, are presented as outsiders, and the Christian–Muslim relationship is portrayed as it was perceived at the time, as a political danger.⁶⁴ The only *Life* in which both Arabs and Jews appear is the *Life* of Nil of Rossano.

Nil confronts Jews on two occasions. On the first, a young Christian who has murdered a Jewish merchant is turned over by the Christian authorities to the Jewish community, which intends to crucify him. Nil manages to save his life by citing a theological regulation, according to which the life of one Christian equals the lives of seven Jews.⁶⁵ On the second occasion, Nil's healing powers and faith are confronted with those of the most famous Jewish physician of the time, Shabbetai Donnolo. In two episodes, Nil refuses Donnolo's medical help; in one case, he himself is sick. On both occasions Nil is victorious over Donnolo's Jewish scientific knowledge through his strong Christian faith in the power of God.⁶⁶

The text is also rich in descriptions of Byzantine–Arab relationships. Nil corresponds with the emir of Palermo, and manages to secure the release of three monks from the Arab prison. In another episode, he opposes the efforts of the metropolitan Blatton to ransom Byzantine captives from Ifrikia. The latter pretends to be a relative of the Arab ruler (Al-Muizz).⁶⁷ Thus, a major difference is here revealed between the representations of the Jews and the Arabs in Byzantine hagiography.

A LOCAL JEWISH POINT OF VIEW

Whether in local hagiography of the eighth–ninth centuries or in later texts, Christian saints confront Jewish leaders on a religious, a magical or a scientific level. This is

not, however, how the Jews perceived this rivalry. The main problem in analyzing the Jewish point of view is that we have only one representative text against the abundance of Greek hagiography. *The Chronicle* [scroll] of *Ahimaaz*, written in 1054 by a Jew from Capua, contains a rich description of the Jewish communities of Byzantine Apulia.⁶⁸ The text is so rich and contains so many elements, that it can certainly be compared to the Christian texts. It is in fact the only source we have from Byzantine Italy that we can use as equivalent to hagiography, for its *mélange* of genres makes it impossible to distinguish between its historical, mythical and literary elements.⁶⁹

In order to collect stories about his family, Ahimaaz ben Paltiel travels from Capua to Apulia for his research. Ahimaaz's goal is to glorify his fathers, who are all rabbis. It is the same goal as that of a Christian disciple who sets out to write down the *Life* of his spiritual father. If we compare the literary representation of the Byzantine rabbi to that of the Byzantine saint, we will see that both figures fulfill the same function. Their role is first and foremost to protect their local community and to preserve the social and religious order. To that end, the rabbi uses the sacred Name of God, known only to him. Although this is very different from the way Christian miracles are performed, the miracle in itself is used for the same objectives by both rabbis and saints.⁷⁰

Just like the Christian saints, the rabbis in *The Chronicle of Ahimaaz* move all around southern Italy. Ahimaaz reveals a network of local leaders spread all over the Jewish communities: Oria, Bari, Beneventum, Venosa, Capua and others. In regard to the Jewish-Christian relationship, *The Chronicle of Ahimaaz* portrays this relationship as entirely in the rabbis' hands. Moreover, all relationships between the two communities are portrayed on the level of their leaders. But while the Jewish leaders are the rabbis, the Christian leaders are bishops and emperors. No saint or monk is mentioned.⁷¹ In one episode, Rabbi Shefatya is summoned to Constantinople by Basil I who is troubled by a serious problem: which is bigger, Hagia Sophia or Solomon's Temple? Rabbi Shefatya proves that the Old Temple was larger.⁷² He then manages to exorcize a demon that has possessed the emperor's daughter. In return, he receives a charter of immunity for his community that saves it from the forced conversion that the emperor has inflicted on the Jews.

This political function of the rabbis is even more explicit in the second part of the text, where Arab emirs and caliphs replace the Byzantines as the main political enemy. Rabbi Shefatya saves the Jewish community of Oria during Savdan's conquest by getting back to the city in time to warn his community of the forthcoming attack.⁷³ The Jewish community evacuates the city in the same manner as the Christian communities which are warned by the local saint of an approaching Arab attack. The rabbis confront the Arab leaders both on Italian and African lands. They are successful in confronting the Arab ruler just as they were successful in confronting the Byzantine authorities.⁷⁴ Here we find that the representation of the Arabs in the Hebrew text is analogous to their representation in the Greek texts. They symbolized a threat. Both the rabbis in the Jewish literature, and the saints in the Christian literature, have here a political function to fulfill vis-à-vis the Arab enemy. This is not the case for Christian-Jewish rivalry.

We saw that Christian-Jewish rivalry is presented in local hagiography as a local Byzantine affair. The Greek hagiography of Byzantine Italy presents it as a religious, not a political, matter. However, this is not how the Jews perceive the situation by

any means. The rabbis in *The Chronicle of Ahimaaz* confront the Christian leaders, both emperors and bishops, at a political level. Vis-à-vis the Christian Byzantines and the Muslim Arabs, the Jews present themselves as independent, both religiously and politically. A conversion might make them Orthodox Byzantines, but from a Jewish point of view it would destroy their identity as Jews. Faced with the Arabs, the Christian Byzantines fear much the same thing: that they will lose their freedom and be taken away to Arab lands where they would face conversion.⁷⁵ In order to deal with such fears, a new type of Byzantine saint is elaborated in the literature of Byzantine Italy, a saint who can confront the Arabs on the political level and provide protection for his community. This is the same model the Jews develop in the figure of the local rabbi.

CONCLUSION

The reality as depicted in the hagiography of the tenth and eleventh centuries presents the local Greek Christian population as constantly menaced. The danger could come from German invaders, but is mainly from the Arabs. Although a Byzantine army was always present, and indeed was successful in repulsing the Arabs from Calabria, Apulia and the Adriatic Sea, its successes are hardly ever mentioned in local hagiography. When they are noted, they are credited to the saint's intervention. In this the representation developed by the local hagiographers of Byzantine Italy, and followed up by them, was unique. The hagiography of the same period written in other meeting points between the Byzantines and the Arabs, namely Asia Minor and the Aegean region, did not produce political saints.⁷⁶ The Byzantine hagiographers of Italy present the local and native saints as the true political leaders of the region, who became successful to the point of negotiating with and being recognized by princes, emperors and emirs.

This local hagiographical perspective, which was different from hagiographical texts from other parts of the empire, also resembled the way the Jewish leadership of southern Italy was portrayed in view of its rivalry with both Christian and Muslim authorities. Moreover, we can identify its roots in the local hagiography of the eighth century, which was produced in order to portray a local point of view on contemporary events. The letters of Theodore Stoudite, as well as the proliferation of the *Lives* of southern Italian saints, testify to the success of the local hagiographers outside the borders of their region, and reveal a Byzantine periphery which local writers portrayed as a center with its own particular qualities and leaders.

NOTES

- 1 Without taking into consideration the case of Sardinia: Rowland 2001; Corrias and Cosentino 2002.
- 2 *Congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto medioevo* 2003; von Falkenhausen 1983.
- 3 Patlagean 2002.
- 4 Anastos 1957; Burgarella 1988; von Falkenhausen 1979; Acconcia Longo 2006.
- 5 Bertolini 1966.
- 6 von Falkenhausen 1983: 257–61; Bertolini 1966; Cammarosano 2003; Azzara 2003.
- 7 Ahmad 1975; Salierno 2000.
- 8 Musca 1964.

- 9 See n. 2.
- 10 Simonsohn 1997; Bucari *et al.* 2002; Rutgers 2002; Lacerenza 2002; Kislinger 2002.
- 11 Patlagean 1964; Acconcia Longo 2006; Efthymiades 2006.
- 12 Compare: Acconcia Longo 2001b.
- 13 Although most of these *Lives* are posterior to the Iconoclast controversy: Ševčenko 1977. For a different view see van Esbroeck and Zanetti 1988.
- 14 Gerbino 1992; van Esbroeck and Zanetti 1988; Acconcia Longo 1990.
- 15 Lucà 1989; Lucà 1991; following Re 2007: 51–2.
- 16 Fatouros 1991: 346, 536, 779. In letter no. 532 from 826 directed to the emperors Michael II and Theophilos the author narrates how the icon of Christ was carried by Pankratios in order to manifest Christ's existence to the pagans. Note that Aldo Messina argues that there is no evidence that Theodore Stoudite referred to the same text that we have in *Vat. gr.* 1591: Messina 2001.
- 17 I am grateful to Elizabeth Jeffreys, who directed me to Cynthia Stallman-Pacitti's thesis at the Bodleian Library: Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 11–12. These could well have been the three images painted on the same icon. However, later in the text they are referred to as individual icons: Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 67.
- 18 Note that only two icons, of Jesus and of Peter, are later mentioned: Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 67. Stallman-Pacitti has argued that the reference to a third (in fact fourth icon) of the Mother of God was a later insertion, added by the early ninth century in response to Iconoclasm: Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 2, 160–2. Stallman-Pacitti suggests that the *Life* was written in the early eighth century, i.e. after Sicily had become a *thema*, but before Iconoclasm and the transfer of the local ecclesiastical jurisdiction from Rome to Constantinople: Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 2, 1–8, 157–62.
- 19 Acconcia Longo 1989: 55–6. Whether the *Life* of Leon of Catania was written as an iconoclast *Life* is a subject of debate between Augusta Acconcia Longo and Marie-France Auzépy: Auzépy 1992; Acconcia Longo 1992; Auzépy 1993; Acconcia Longo 1993.
- 20 Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 23–5, 181–2, 231–61, 281, 340–2.
- 21 See previous note.
- 22 For example, in the *Life* of Leon of Catania: Acconcia Longo 1989: 83–4. Compare the accusation that Pankratios was a *magos*, by the inhabitants of Taormina enraged that they were not warned by the saint of the Calabrese attack: Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 398–9.
- 23 Compare with Leontios' *Apology*, in which the author defends the Christian veneration of the icon in view of Jewish accusations of idolatry: Déroche 1994: 67–70, 87–94.
- 24 Compare with Cameron 1996: 261–3, 268–70. Note that in Leontios' *Apology*, which precedes Iconoclasm, the Jews' representation as idolaters has an entirely polemical argument: “the veneration of the icon and the cross cannot be considered idolatry more than the Jewish veneration of the Torah and the images in Salomon's Temple”: Déroche 1994: 90. The author refers here to the Old Testament in order to argue that the Sons of Israel had used objects as intermediate to God, in the same manner that the Christians use the icon and cross. Compare with another anti-Jewish pre-iconoclastic text: Andrist 1999, where idolatry is hardly used as a prospective Jewish anti-Christian argument.
- 25 Compare: Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 25, 89–125, concerning the biblical narrative, with: Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 118, 242 and Leontios' *Apology*: Déroche 1994.
- 26 Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 337–42.
- 27 Idolatry is attributed to the adversary in both iconoclastic and iconodule hagiography: Acconcia Longo 2001b.
- 28 von Falkenhausen 1983.
- 29 Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 374–6.
- 30 Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 376–94. No such battle has come down to us in other sources. The Lombards apparently did not make it to Sicily. As for Remaldos, he could well be either the duke Romualdus I (671–87) or Romualdus II (706–31/2) who managed to conquer Calabria: von Falkenhausen 1983: 287–8.
- 31 Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 396–405.
- 32 Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 405–7; Acconcia Longo 2006: 148, n. 142. For Stephanos of Reggio (*BHG* 1668): AASS Iul. II: 217–20; Acconcia Longo 1991.
- 33 Evagrius himself arrives in Rome and meets Peter only after Pankratios' death: Stallman-Pacitti 1986: vol. 1, 413. See also Acconcia Longo 2006: 148.

- 34 I am grateful to Mario Re for sending me his exhaustive recent study on the different versions of the three martyrs, and their manuscript tradition: Re 2007.
- 35 See e.g. the *Doctrina Jacobi*: Dagron and Déroche 1991.
- 36 Strazzeri 2006: 666–9. I am grateful to Vera von Falkenhausen for this article.
- 37 *Vat. gr.* 1591 fol. 204r II – fol. 216v II. Note that in the text the Jews clearly argue that the emperors used to adhere to their faith: *Vat. gr.* 1581 fol. 209v II. In fact, the whole cycle of the three martyrs opens up with the conversion of a Jew.
- 38 Note that in the *Life* of Gregorios of Agrigento, no Jew is mentioned, though its editor, Albrecht Berger, suggests that the idol *Eber*, whom the saint fights, could be a reference to the Jews (from the word ‘*Ebraioi*’): Berger 1995: 46–7, 266. Compare with the attack on the synagogue of Syracuse in the Latin *Life* of Zosimos of Syracuse (*BHL* 9026), written prior to Iconoclasm: AASS Mars. III: 839–43, 842 (following Berger 1995: 47). On the Greek origin and Synaxarion versions of the *Life* see: Acconcia Longo 1999; Re 2000; Re 2001. As for the famous *dialexis* between Gregentios of Taphar and the Jew Herban: Berger 2006: 450ff.; according to its editor it was probably composed in Constantinople in the mid-tenth century and definitely not in southern Italy or Sicily: Berger 2006: 107.
- 39 I focus here on the Jewish figure, but this is also evident in texts which do not refer to Jews. See Acconcia Longo 2001b: 41.
- 40 Messina 2001. See the critics of Augusta Acconcia Longo: Acconcia Longo 2001a.
- 41 Efthymiades 2006 has explored how Christian–Muslim relationships are portrayed in the Greek literature of southern Italy and compared this with representations from the Byzantine–Arab border regions of Anatolia.
- 42 Da Costa Louillet 1960.
- 43 Caruso 1999. Compare to the *Life* of Zosimos which, as Augusta Acconcia Longo showed, deifies such a division: Acconcia Longo 1999.
- 44 Acconcia Longo 2006: 127–30; Pertusi 1974.
- 45 Rossi Taibbi 1962: 36–44; AASS Mar. I: 99–100; Cozza-Luzi 1893: 13–28.
- 46 Rossi Taibbi 1962: 4ff.
- 47 Rossi Taibbi 1962: 36–8, 42, 58, 74, 104.
- 48 Rossi Taibbi 1962: 40, 58, 106–10.
- 49 Rossi Taibbi 1962: 74, 104.
- 50 Giovanelli 1972: 106–7.
- 51 Giovanelli 1972: 126–8.
- 52 PG 127: 484, following da Costa Louillet 1960: 170.
- 53 In contrast to the local bishops. Compare with Photios’ reply to Leon, the archbishop of Reggio, in view of the Muslim presence in the region: Martin 1998.
- 54 As Orestes, the patriarch of Jerusalem and a disciple of Sabas the Younger writes in the *Life* of Sabas the Younger: “his greatest miracle was not inferior to that of Elias, Eliashas or Peter the Great”: Cozza-Luzi 1893: 37.
- 55 As does Elias the Younger: Rossi Taibbi 1962: 38–42, 74; as well as Elias the Cave-dweller: AASS Sept. III: 856.
- 56 Rossi Taibbi 1962: 42; Giovanelli 1972: 90–4.
- 57 Rossi Taibbi 1962: 42.
- 58 Giovanelli 1972: 101–3.
- 59 Cozza-Luzi 1893: 37.
- 60 Cozza-Luzi 1893: 63–4.
- 61 Cozza-Luzi 1893: 64–6.
- 62 He did that by praying and fasting: Rossi Taibbi 1962: 82.
- 63 AASS Oct. VI: 340; AASS Mar. II: *30.
- 64 Though there are a few references to good neighborliness, such as the bread Nil receives from the Muslims in his escape: Giovanelli 1972: 51–3.
- 65 Giovanelli 1972: 81.
- 66 Giovanelli 1972: 93, 98. For Shabbetai Donnolo: Sharf 1995: 160–77; Sharf 1976.
- 67 Giovanelli 1972: 108–10.
- 68 Klar 1974; English translation: Salzman 1924.
- 69 For its mixed genre: Bonfil 1996a. For its hagiographic characteristics: Benin 1985, who does not compare it, however, to Byzantine hagiography of Italy.

- 70 Christian hagiographers present both Jewish and pagan supernatural power as magic. In this they are completely in line with the Jewish literature, in which magic and witchcraft are performed by using the sacred Name of God. Moreover, in both Christian and Jewish sources these magical capacities are related to the Hebraic script. Thus, for example, the hero of the *Life* of Leon of Catania, Heliodoros the magician, receives from a local Jew a script which enables him to contact the devil: Acconcia Longo 1989: 83–4.
- 71 See the confrontation between Oria's bishop and Rabbi Khanan'el: Klar 1974: 23–4.
- 72 Klar 1974: 17–19.
- 73 Klar 1974: 20–1.
- 74 For instance, Rabbi Paltiel's ability to read the stars enables him to rise in the court of Al-Mu'izz and becomes the caliph's chief advisor: Klar 1974: 31–2.
- 75 Note that the only place where there is a question of the conversion of Christians is in an Arab land and far away from Italy: Rossi Taibbi 1962: 24.
- 76 Efthymiades 2006.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE MIRACLES OF GREGORY PALAMAS BY PHILOTHEOS KOKKINOS



Alice-Mary Talbot

After a noteworthy decline in the production of hagiographic texts in Byzantium in the eleventh, twelfth and first half of the thirteenth centuries, the Palaiologan era (1261–1453) witnessed a revival in the composition of saints' lives and miracle collections.¹ Assemblages of late Byzantine *miracula*² fall into two categories: the miracles of new saints and miracles that occurred at the well-established shrines of older saints or the Virgin. Examples of the latter are Maximos the Deacon's narrative of miracles at the shrine of SS Kosmas and Damian just outside the walls of Constantinople (c. 1300); the accounts composed by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos of miraculous cures that took place at the shrine of the Zoodochos Pege, also located just outside the Byzantine capital (c. 1308–20); and John Lazaropoulos' collection of miracles that occurred at the shrine of St Eugenios in Trebizond (1360s).³ Only two assemblages of miraculous healings effected by new saints survive, one by Theoktistos the Stoudite on the miracles of the patriarch Athanasios I of Constantinople (1289–93; 1303–9), probably written in the 1330s,⁴ and the second on the *miracula* of Gregory Palamas, composed by Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos in the 1360s,⁵ and the subject of this essay. As we shall see, both collections were probably intended as dossiers to promote the canonization of the holy men they praised.

GREGORY PALAMAS

Palamas, born in 1294 or 1296, was an Athonite monk and distinguished theologian of the fourteenth century, who promoted a new emphasis on mysticism and monastic contemplation, often referred to as hesychasm. He taught that it was possible through intensive prayer to achieve a vision of the uncreated light of God, such as shone on Christ at his Transfiguration on Mt Tabor. This Palamite doctrine gave rise to a serious controversy within the Orthodox Church in the mid-fourteenth century, resulting in a series of councils in Constantinople (1341, 1347, 1351) that in the end supported Palamas' views and declared them official doctrine.

Palamas was appointed metropolitan of Thessalonika in 1347, but was initially denied admission to the city by the rebellious Zealots, and had to seek refuge on Mt Athos. Following the quelling of the Zealot revolt in 1349, he was able to take up his

position as hierarch. He was taken prisoner by the Turks in 1354 and held by them in captivity in Asia Minor until 1355. The account he wrote of his captivity is a useful source for conditions in Turkish-occupied Anatolia in the mid-fourteenth century. We know the precise day of his death, 14 November, at the age of sixty-three, but the year is disputed. Older scholarship argues that he died in 1359,⁶ while more recent research moves his death date forward by two years, to 1357.⁷

PHILOTHEOS KOKKINOS

The author of the *miracula* of Palamas, Philotheos Kokkinos, was his contemporary and supported his views on hesychasm. Born around 1300 in Thessalonika, Philotheos was, like Palamas, a monk on Mt Athos who rose in the ecclesiastical hierarchy to become a metropolitan in 1347 with the triumph of John VI Kantakouzenos (1347–54); in the case of Philotheos, he was promoted to the see of Herakleia in Thrace, where he remained until 1353 when he was chosen as patriarch of Constantinople. His first tenure on the patriarchal throne lasted only one year, until 1354, on account of the deposition of Kantakouzenos, but he was restored as patriarch in 1364 and led the Church until 1376. Philotheos wrote theological treatises, hymns and a collection of liturgical rubrics, as well as a series of lengthy *vitae* of new saints of the fourteenth century, all of them having some connection with his hometown of Thessalonika.⁸ He includes an account of the miracles performed by Palamas in his lengthy biography of the metropolitan, termed a *Logos* rather than a *Bios*. Philotheos most likely composed this *Logos* sometime between 1364, when he returned to the patriarchal throne, and 1368 when Palamas was formally recognized as a saint by the synod of Constantinople.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CULT OF PALAMAS AND HIS CANONIZATION

We are well informed on the development of the cult of Palamas, thanks in large part to his biography by Philotheos and a synodal document of 1368. There was evidence of Palamas' sanctity even before his death, attested by his performance of six miracles in Thessalonika. During his final illness he predicted the day of his death, a topos of hagiography, and as his soul left his body his face was illuminated with radiance, and the room glowed with light (chs 114–16). Curiously, Philotheos provides little explicit information about Palamas' funerary rites and the place of his burial in the cathedral of Hagia Sophia, but some details about the tomb can be gleaned from the miracle accounts. His corpse was laid to rest in a stone sarcophagus, with a stone lid, located on the right side of the church (chs 119–20); an icon of Palamas was placed nearby (ch. 125). Ailing pilgrims to the tomb usually rubbed the afflicted part of their body against the stone sarcophagus; they also prostrated themselves, kissed the tomb and prayed to Palamas' icon. Some afflicted individuals stayed several days in the church, praying for healing (ch. 121). Since Philotheos wrote his text within ten years of Palamas' death, we can be assured that veneration of the deceased metropolitan began very soon after his demise.⁹

Shortly after the death of Palamas, his veneration spread to neighboring cities, most notably Kastoria. Philotheos reports that, following the miraculous cure of a

woman named Zoe from severe menstrual problems, the citizens of the town decided to “set up a holy icon to Gregory . . . and celebrated a splendid feast for all the people on the day of his death, and hastened to erect a church for him” (chs 127–8). Philotheos notes further that the people of Kastoria did not wait for Palamas’ official canonization before venerating him as a saint, but proceeded of their own accord (ch. 128). Palamas also twice healed a boy from Verroia, appearing first to his father and later to his mother in a dream vision (chs 131–2). In addition he cured the boy’s aunt in Constantinople (ch. 133).

An iconographic tradition began very early for Palamas, based no doubt on the image next to his tomb.¹⁰ A portrait was painted in the Vlatadon monastery in Thessalonika within a few years of his death, and another image of similar date can be seen in the chapel of the Holy Anargyroi at Vatopedi. Significantly in this latter image Palamas is labeled as a miracle-worker (θαυματουργός).¹¹

Philotheos’ synodal decision of 1368 about the canonization of Palamas provides detailed information about the unofficial and official developments in his sanctification. While Philotheos was in retirement between his two patriarchates, and residing at the Akataleptos monastery in Constantinople, he devoted much time to promoting the cult of Palamas, and privately celebrated his feast-day. He took the initiative of writing to the *megas oikonomos* of the metropolis of Thessalonika, asking him to send information on Palamas’ healing miracles. The *oikonomos* insisted on receiving sworn testimony from the beneficiaries of the miracles, which he then passed on to Philotheos.¹² In his *Logos* Philotheos calls this man a “brother”, that is, a monk, and praises him for his composition of the miracles with “an abundance of style and wisdom” (ch. 134.5–6). Philotheos also reports that subsequently his predecessor as patriarch, Kallistos I (second patriarchate, 1355–63), who shared his esteem for Palamas, confirmed Palamas’ performance of miracles by writing c. 1360–1 to the suffragan bishops of Thessalonika and to metropolitan officials, asking them to send him signed testimony about the miraculous cures effected by Palamas.¹³ These high clerics assembled at the instigation of the empress mother, Anna of Savoy, who was resident in Thessalonika at that time; “after summoning those people who had been healed and receiving testimony from them with assurances that their words were true, they wrote down these [accounts] and signed them, and sent them to my predecessor as patriarch.”¹⁴

The *miracula* give a few clues as to the sources of information for the initial compilation of evidence on miraculous events associated with Palamas. His status as a holy man was confirmed by the illumination of the room in which he died, and the radiance of his face. The former was attested by two witnesses, both priests, and the latter by everyone who viewed his corpse on its bier (ch. 116). A monk from Kastoria healed of a badly infected foot could still show the scars from the forty lesions from which pus had flowed, attesting to the severity of his affliction, so marvelously cured (ch. 129). The nobleman delivered from severe constipation is described as “going with good strength and vigor to the tomb of the great one [Palamas], [and] himself proclaiming to all with a loud voice the extraordinary miracle” (ch. 118). A number of other people healed by Palamas are said to have gone to his tomb to proclaim his praises and utter words of thanksgiving for their deliverance from affliction (chs 124, 125, 129). Philotheos states that “truthful witnesses of these words [about the cures of incurable afflictions] are Thessalians and Illyrians and the people who . . . narrate

wondrously . . . the miracles of the great man” (ch. 126). It is possible that an attendant at the shrine of Palamas wrote down such testimonies of cures. Philotheos also mentions that “[stories of] the operation of the miracles circulated throughout the entire city [of Thessalonika]” (ch. 122).

Philotheos compiled the assembled testimonies some time before 1368, no doubt unifying and embellishing their style, and probably adding details about the symptoms and causes of the various diseases. The composition by Philotheos of the miracles in their present form is confirmed by similarities with the terminology and phraseology of his other works.¹⁵ Soon after regaining the patriarchal throne in 1364, he wrote to the monks at the Great Lavra on Athos, assuring them that it was permissible to celebrate the feast-day of Palamas privately.¹⁶ Early in 1368 the feast-day of Palamas was formally instituted at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and in all metropolitan sees by a synodal decree (the so-called *Tomos* against Prochoros Kydones). Philotheos notes therein that the procedures followed with regard to the canonization of Palamas paralleled developments in the institution of the cult of Patriarch Athanasios I: popular veneration of his tomb at the Xerolophos monastery where miraculous healings occurred; annual procession of the Xerolophos monks to Hagia Sophia on the Sunday of Orthodoxy; and a subsequent official synodal declaration of his sanctity.¹⁷ The *miracula* of Athanasios, compiled by Theoktistos the Stoudite, were evidently also intended to support the process of his canonization.¹⁸

STRUCTURE OF THE MIRACLE COLLECTION

The collection of miracles effected by Palamas has attracted surprisingly little attention to date, except in Antonio Rigo’s exhaustive study of the canonization of the metropolitan of Thessalonika.¹⁹ This may be because the dossier is not preserved in the manuscript tradition as a separate collection of *miracula*, like that of Athanasios, but as part of a very lengthy *vita*. Only recently were the *miracula* of Palamas translated into a western European language.²⁰

The miracles are divided into two groups: those performed by Palamas while he was still alive, and those effected after his death. The six miracles wrought during Palamas’ lifetime all took place during the period when he was metropolitan of Thessalonika, and are described in scattered chapters (81, 97 and 105–8). These miracle accounts are followed by an account of Palamas’ final illness, some sort of abdominal ailment, his foretelling the day of his death, his deathbed speech (ch. 114) and the separation of his soul from his body at the age of sixty-three (ch. 115).

The posthumous healing miracles are assembled together in chapters 117–33, at the very end of Philotheos’ lengthy *Logos*. An initial set of miracles performed in Thessalonika is recounted in chapters 117–25. Chapter 125 leads into a transitional paragraph (126) by narrating the cure of an elderly émigré from Adrianople to Thessalonika who was cured of unsightly callosities on his hand, as well as the healing of an unidentified “foreign monk.” Philotheos is making the point that the metropolitan of Thessalonika did not limit his miraculous healing to members of his own flock, but extended his benefactions to people from other cities as well. Chapter 126 declares that people in Thessaly and Illyria benefited from Palamas’ healing powers, and that very soon after his death people in other cities were painting his icon, celebrating his feast-day and building churches in his honor. He is in fact

referring to Kastoria, where the local population instituted a feast-day on the anniversary of Palamas' death without awaiting a synodal decision, that is, prior to 1368 (ch. 128). Philotheos next narrates the miraculous cures of two inhabitants of Kastoria, Zoe and the monk Ephraim (chs 127 and 129).²¹ Philotheos then goes on to describe healing miracles in Verroia, where the son of Andronikos Tzimiskes is twice cured by Palamas of life-threatening illnesses, and in Constantinople where the sister-in-law of Tzimiskes is also healed (chs 130–3). As already noted by Rigo,²² the final chapter in the miracle collection (134) has no connection with healing, and is really not a miracle at all, but rather a dream vision, assuring a hermit at the Athonite Lavra of St Athanasios that Palamas was ranked together with the great founding Fathers of the Church, and that his approval was necessary for any synodal doctrinal decision.

TYPES OF AFFLICTIONS HEALED

Both as living hierarch and in his tomb in Hagia Sophia, Gregory Palamas was credited by his hagiographer with the healing of a wide variety of afflictions, including paralysis, blindness, cataract, deafness, hemorrhage, migraine headache, intestinal problems, calluses on the palm of a hand and an infected foot. One can detect an unusual focus on problems of defecation, ranging from incontinence of the bowels (ch. 107) to diarrhea (chs 120–1) to three cases of extreme constipation (chs 118, 120, 121), and pose the question of whether this has any connection with the fact that Palamas himself is reported to have succumbed to an abdominal ailment (ch. 114). One can also note that this is a very different list of afflictions from those that affected pilgrims to the shrines of Athanasios or the Pege in Constantinople, where problems such as demonic possession, urinary dysfunction, fevers, epilepsy, leprosy, dropsy or cancer were more common.²³

ATTITUDES TOWARD MEDICINE AND PHYSICIANS

Like most miracle accounts, that of Philotheos Kokkinos reveals a negative attitude toward doctors, with criticism of their inability to heal their patients, their incompetence or even malpractice.²⁴ The uselessness of physicians is mentioned in the case of the nun Eleodora whose eye was afflicted by a “flux,” resulting in terrible pain: “all the skill of physicians, both local and foreign, was stymied by the severity of the affliction” (ch. 97). Likewise the gold-embroiderer Palates, whose son was afflicted with some sort of hemorrhage for fifteen months, complains “that he had used every doctor and every remedy on behalf [of his son], but had accomplished nothing up to this time” (ch. 107). A hieromonk suffered from recurrent headaches which did not respond “to any medical knowledge or drug treatment” (ch. 117).

In other cases the physicians' treatment resulted in a worsening of the affliction. A choir leader in Thessalonika suffered from some unspecified ailment caused by “noxious matter,” for which the physicians prescribed a cold diet, as a result of which the noxious matter was neither absorbed nor digested, and became compacted in the extremities of his body, leading to paralysis of his arms and legs (ch. 119). An imperial weaver with severe constipation was prescribed a purgative; fortunately, he drank only half of the dose, which caused a violent and life-threatening diarrhea

(ch. 120). A woman who earned her living by spinning developed a painful shoulder condition as the result of a flux. “Medical [skill] applied many [procedures] to get rid of the flux, so that finally a cauterizing iron [was used] on her shoulder . . . but it accomplished nothing more than to add to her pains and to make the suffering in her arm even worse” (ch. 123).

On the other hand, Philotheos never accuses physicians of greed, a topos in other miracle collections, and in chapter 121 he provides a sympathetic portrait of an ailing physician who is powerless to heal himself:

This great physician of souls and of bodies [Gregory] also cured a physician. For a [physician] was bedridden for a very long time, contending with all sorts of illnesses, so that as a result of his long confinement his flesh developed sores and a multitude of worms infested the sores. And not only was he ill, but also his wife and children, and the house of the physician was not a medical office, as it should have been, but rather a hospice for the sick.

After the physician was healed by a vision of Gregory, a visit to a bathhouse and pilgrimage to Gregory’s shrine, he recovered his strength “so that unexpectedly he was able to mount a horse nimbly and journey around the city, as previously, to practice his craft and heal many people.” The passage provides the important information that this Thessalonian doctor had an office in his home and made house calls, furnishing additional support to Timothy Miller’s argument that private practice was more common than hospital care in the Palaiologan period.²⁵

Although he could be quite critical of the failures of medical treatment, Philotheos, like some other Palaiologan hagiographers, was evidently interested in the practice of medicine and the aetiology of disease, and had picked up some medical terminology from books or acquaintances. For example, he used the technical word from the medical literature for the tailbone, calling it the “holy bone” (ἱερὸν ὀστοῦν or *os sacrum*) (ch. 118.42),²⁶ and states that doctors (ἱατρῶν παῖδες) use the term “colic” (κωλική) for severe constipation (ch. 118.4).²⁷ Among the specific treatments he mentioned as being prescribed by physicians were a cold diet (ch. 119), the cauterizing iron (ch. 123), purgatives (ch. 120) and “warm medicaments” (poultices?) (ch. 122).

Philotheos vividly describes the protracted nature of the various illnesses and the discouraging sequence of symptoms. Many of the afflictions had oppressed their sufferers for a very long time: the daughter of the *orphanotrophos* was paralyzed for three years (ch. 81), the son of Palates had a hemorrhage for fifteen months (ch. 108), a hieromonk suffered from migraine headaches for seven years (ch. 117), the émigré from Adrianople had severe calluses on his hand for nine years (ch. 125), Zoe from Kastoria had a menstrual disorder for seven years (ch. 127). The hagiographer also recounts sympathetically the worsening nature of some afflictions, as in the case of the hieromonk with migraines: “the pain in his head did not go away, but returned periodically, first once a month, then as time passed twice and three times and several times a month, and even more often and more severely and left the man in dire condition” (ch. 117). The hieromonk Porphyrios was at first afflicted with a sharp pain in his left side. Soon after he was miraculously cured of this affliction, he again fell ill with a constriction in his throat that prevented him from swallowing either

food or drink (ch. 120). The Kastorian monk's troubles began with stepping on a thorn which punctured his right foot. Then the pain and infection transferred to his left foot which swelled up like a wineskin; eventually pus began to pour forth from forty openings (abscesses?). After he was healed by Palamas, he did not follow through with his vow to visit his shrine in Thessalonika, and the pain and swelling returned to his foot, accompanied by high fever (ch. 129).

Most afflicted people were healed quite suddenly, but for others the recovery was protracted. The choir leader at St Demetrios was at first paralyzed in both arms and legs; the paralysis gradually wore off, except in three fingers of his right hand (ch. 119). The well-born woman with a paralyzed right arm gradually regained the use of her limb over a period of three days, perhaps because of her previous skepticism and lack of faith in Palamas (ch. 122). Another woman with a painful arm also had a frustratingly slow recovery (ch. 123):

the great physician of the afflicted [Palamas] began his healing in a somewhat playful manner, and did not relieve her pain right away, even though it was possible, but eased it slowly and gradually . . . he first drove it away from her shoulder and upper arm, but permitted it to remain in her elbow and forearm. But the woman . . . as was likely feeling the even more violent assault of the pain, since it was concentrated into a narrow area, began to cry out against the physician [Palamas].

After she visited his tomb a second time, "he then compassionately brought the remainder [of the healing] and gave a complete cure to the woman, . . . seeming to draw out for a long time the pain and that lengthy illness from the tips of her fingers like a fine thread."²⁸

Most authors of fourteenth-century miracle collections tried to explain the causes of the ailments that afflicted the people who came to healing shrines. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in the miracles at the Pege shrine by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos and in the miracles of St Eugenios by John Lazaropoulos,²⁹ and appears to a lesser extent in the miracles of the patriarch Athanasios.³⁰ Philotheos believed that certain illnesses were caused by noxious fluids moving through the body, what he termed a "flux" (ρεῦμα). Thus a nun went blind as the result of a "noxious flux [which] caused terrible pain in the eye" (ch. 97). The hieromonk Porphyrios was afflicted with matter flowing into his throat, causing such a constriction that he was unable to eat, drink or swallow at all (ch. 106). A nobleman suffered from extreme constipation, because "some noxious material had compacted and solidified and transformed into a stone and this blocked the outlet for normal defecation" (ch. 118). A choir leader became paralyzed in his arms and legs because some noxious matter, "moving unabsorbed and undigested, took refuge in the extremities of the body, and then the arms and legs of the chief of the musicians were paralyzed. Many days passed and the pestilential matter passed from them [his limbs]," but part remained in the first three fingers of his right hand which continued to be rigid and unbending (ch. 119). And in two cases, women's arms were paralyzed on account of a "flux of some pernicious liquid" (ch. 122) or a "pernicious flux . . . that flowed from the shoulder of her left arm and rendered it useless" (ch. 123).

PHILOTHEOS' EMPATHY WITH THE AFFLICTED

Related to Philotheos' vivid narration of the distressing symptoms, suffering and discouragement of the afflicted individuals healed by Palamas is a keen sensitivity to the embarrassment and depression to which these sick people were subject, as they were bedridden for years, suffered from shameful problems or were unable to carry out their normal work. A particularly striking passage tells of a nun who had raised from infancy an abandoned baby girl. The child developed an incontinency of the bowels that caused her to soil her bed at night, just at the time when the nun would have expected her to be toilet trained; this caused the foster mother to turn against the child and to abandon her former "goodwill and love" (ch. 107). The choirmaster with a paralyzed hand grieved "that he could not exercise his [musical] talent as before, nor could he write or compose melodies on account of the paralysis in his hand" (ch. 119). The woman with the paralyzed arm was embarrassed because it did not hang down naturally, "but stretched upright and to the side, rigid, unbending . . . it was shameful to see" (ch. 122). Another woman with a bad arm was particularly distressed because her affliction prevented her from spinning and earning her living by such handwork (ch. 123). A man from Adrianople suffered from a disfigurement of his hand:

Four calluses suddenly appeared on the palm of his left hand, and they were very large, and some were hard and resistant and harsh and sharp . . . so as not to permit the palm to close naturally into a fist and it appeared inappropriate to touch because of the rough and harsh and sharp character of the calluses . . . and in addition it was shameful and ugly and a blemish for the entire body.
(ch. 125)

Finally, let me mention Philotheos' touching description of a father whose son is on his deathbed (ch. 131):

His father, as if consumed by grief, withdrew, avoiding the very sight of the child and seeing him separated from his soul, and sat by himself . . . placing his right hand on his knees and his head on his right hand, in the posture of mourners.

One can find some similarities in the *miracula* of Athanasios by Theoktistos, with his sympathetic description of the blind nun who "sat in darkness for six whole years and relied on her relatives to lead her by the hand."³¹ Likewise, with regard to the nun Magdalene, Theoktistos notes that she suffered "a double affliction, for in addition to the disease she could not endure the shame since she was not able to pass water naturally, as everyone does, but was incontinent night and day alike, and the affliction was unbearable."³² Maria Frangopoulina endured twenty years of a uterine (menstrual) disorder, "which was not only deadly and difficult to cure, but also caused unbearable shame."³³

METHODS OF HEALING

While metropolitan of Thessalonika, Palamas effected miraculous healings primarily by making the sign of the cross over the afflicted individual and/or laying on of hands

on the affected portion of the body (chs 105–8). The mechanisms for posthumous healing miracles fall into two primary categories: dream visions in which Palamas appears to the ailing person, and the actual visitation of the patient to his tomb in Hagia Sophia, or a combination of the two. Often a cure ensues after the pilgrim rubs the afflicted limb or body part against the stone sarcophagus, especially its lid (as in chs 119, 120, 122, 125). In the dream visions Palamas may make the sign of the cross and place his hands on the ailing part of the body (chs 117, 119), or urge visitation of his tomb (ch. 120). In one more complex scenario, the daughter of the ailing physician has a dream in which Palamas orders one of his deacons to cleanse the man's sores with water from a holy basin used for the rite of the Washing of the Feet on Maundy Thursday. Subsequently her father goes to the bathhouse and washes away his lesions, and then visits Palamas' shrine (ch. 121). Twice the sick are healed after prayer to Palamas' icon (chs 125, 129).

Several of the healing miracles are related to the power associated with Palamas' vestments, especially a *stole* which had been refurbished for him at the beginning of his metropolitanate by the gold-embroiderer Palates (ch. 108), evidently the same *stole* that Palamas was wearing when the nun Eleodora was healed of blindness by touching its hem to her eye (ch. 97). Andronikos Tzimiskes, whose son was on the point of death, had a dream vision of Palamas wearing his holy *stole*, and upon waking found that his child had miraculously recovered (ch. 131). The anonymous nobleman described in chapter 118, who suffered from severe constipation, had a dream vision in which Palamas appeared to him in the guise of a hieromonk also called Gregory. The monk Gregory extracted "from the folds of his garment a piece of the holy *stole* which had been previously refurbished for him, . . . marked with nine gold crosses and placed it on the afflicted area [his rear end]"; when the nobleman awoke, he was able to evacuate his bowels. The allusion to the nine gold crosses suggests that this *stole* is the *omophorion*, a long scarf adorned with crosses that was reserved for bishops.³⁴ It also seems probable that the *epomis* mentioned in chapter 120 is the same garment, and that it was deposited with Palamas in his tomb. Philotheos' account is somewhat puzzling in this regard, however. An imperial weaver, afflicted with constipation, dreamed that he was advised by a monk to go to the archbishop's house and place Palamas' *epomis* on his kidneys (*sic*). When he went to the house, however, he was unable to obtain the vestment. Then (still in the dream vision) the monk led him to the tomb where he found the *epomis* and placed it on his kidneys. Upon awakening the weaver decided that the *epomis* referred to in the vision was really the stone lid of Palamas' sarcophagus. An actual visit to the tomb and rubbing of his kidneys against the sarcophagus resulted in deliverance from his affliction.

LITERARY STYLE

The *miracula* of Palamas are written in a middle level of style, enlivened by frequent use of dialogue, first-person narration and vivid detail. Use of Scriptural quotations is restrained, and limited to the New Testament. In contrast, the rest of the *Logos* on Palamas and Philotheos' other hagiographical works include numerous citations from the Old Testament, patristic authors and classical texts.³⁵ Very occasionally in the miracle tales Philotheos resorts to archaizing features, such as the use of the term Gorpaios (a Macedonian name) for September (chs 81 and 97), and use of the dual

(ch. 121.25). He is partial to μέν and δέ constructions and makes modest use of rhetorical flourishes, such as rhetorical questions,³⁶ exclamations³⁷ and chiasmus.³⁸ Figures of speech involving repetition, such as polyptoton,³⁹ assonance/alliteration⁴⁰ and homoioteleuton,⁴¹ are also encountered.

DEPICTION OF BYZANTINE SOCIETY

Like so many miracle collections, the *miracula* of Palamas by Philotheos Kokkinos offer wonderful insights into everyday life in the fourteenth century, and provide some unique information, especially about Thessalonika. The afflicted represent a cross-section of Thessalonian society, men, women and children. Half of them are from a religious milieu: nuns, monks, priests, a choirmaster and a foundling girl raised at a convent. The lay people include a gold embroiderer, an imperial weaver of purple cloth, a physician and three members of the (originally) anti-Palamite Tzimiskes family from Verroia. They range from well-born nobility to a poor widow who earns her living by spinning. Only a small number are named, surprising in view of the eyewitness testimonies assembled in Thessalonika. The nun Eleodora, the monk Ephraim, the gold-embroiderer Palates, the hieromonk Porphyrios and Zoe from Kastoria are not encountered elsewhere.⁴² The Basilikon convent is also known only from this text.⁴³

In addition to data on the development of Palamas' cult and the practice of medicine in Thessalonika, Philotheos' vignettes provide the following interesting tidbits of information: the upbringing of a foundling girl in a convent;⁴⁴ a gold embroiderer's refurbishing of an ecclesiastical vestment for Palamas after he took office; a physician who makes house calls on horseback; the presence of imperial weavers of purple cloth in Thessalonika; a man asking his maidservant for a basin of wash-water upon arising in the morning.

Particularly striking are the close personal relationships that are depicted: a father grieving for his dying son (ch. 131); a daughter so worried about the illness of her physician father that she is vouchsafed a dream vision of St Gregory (ch. 121); friends and relatives crowding sympathetically around a sick-bed (ch. 118); the female neighbors of a woman with a painful arm who take pity on her misery and persuade her to visit the saint's shrine (ch. 123); pilgrims to the tomb conversing with each other about their afflictions (ch. 125); a woman so agitated over her sister's illness that she runs into the streets of Constantinople in the middle of the night like "a mad and crazy woman" to go pray at the church of the Chora for her sister's recovery. Surely the miracle collection composed by Philotheos Kokkinos must be reckoned among the most successful literary compositions of this genre, and will repay further study.

NOTES

- 1 For an overview of Palaiologan hagiography, see Talbot forthcoming.
- 2 A listing of late Byzantine *miracula* (but omitting those of Palamas discussed here) can be found in Efthymiades 1999.
- 3 On Palaiologan miracle collections, see the chapter by Stephanos Efthymiades in Efthymiades forthcoming, and Efthymiades 2004.

- 4 Ed. and trans. Talbot 1983.
- 5 Originally published in PG 151: 551–656; new edn Tsames 1985: 425–591. The miracle accounts are found in chs 81, 97, 105–8 and 117–33.
- 6 See e.g. Meyendorff 1959: 168; *ODB*: s.v. Palamas, Gregory; and Tsames 1985: 563 n. 512, following the old article of Dyobouniotes 1924: 74.
- 7 *PLP*: no. 21546 and Rigo 1993: 159 and n. 9.
- 8 For an introductory sketch, see Talbot 2006.
- 9 Although a hostile source, Nikephoros Gregoras provides independent evidence of the rapid spread of Palamas' cult. He asserts that supporters of the deceased Palamas spread rumors about miraculous healings and bribed poor homeless people to go to Palamas' tomb and disseminate tales of miraculous dream visions; see Gregoras 1829–55: III, 350–1. Rigo dates this portion of Gregoras' text to 1358; cf. Rigo 1993: 165.
- 10 Cf. Rigo 1993: 171–2.
- 11 See Gerstel 2003: fig. 19 and 235–7, where the previous bibliography is cited. See also Rigo 1993: 171–4.
- 12 PG 151: 711B.
- 13 Darrouzès 1977: no. 2430; PG 151: 711C.
- 14 PG 151: 711C.
- 15 A quick *TLG* search has revealed the following parallels: the phrase μοχθηρὰ ἔλη is found in Philotheos' *Oration* 2.344, *Oration* 9.253 and the *Vita Sabae iunioris*, ch. 7.23, as well as in the *Logos* of Palamas, ed. Tsames 1985: ch. 119. The phrase τοὺς δοκίμους τῶν ἱατρῶν (*Logos*, ch. 118.8) is paralleled in the *vita Germani Hagioritae*, ch. 31.24 and in *Oration* 9.348. The phrase κένωσις τῶν περιτωμάτων is used in both the *Logos*, ch. 120.2, and in the *vita Sabae iunioris*, ch. 47.11. The expression τοῦ σώζοντος λόγου is found in the *Logos*, ch. 122.35, and twice in Philotheos' Antirrhethics against John VI (*Oration* 13.17, 14.288).
- 16 PG 151: 711D.
- 17 PG 151: 711D–712B; Darrouzès 1977: no. 2540.
- 18 Talbot 1983: 21–30.
- 19 Rigo 1993: 186–95. Neither Efthymiades 1999 nor Efthymiades 2004 mentions the miracles of Palamas. I have not seen Efthymiades forthcoming.
- 20 An Italian translation of the life of Gregory by Philotheos Kokkinos (including the *miracula*) is to be found in Perrella *et al.* 2003: 1353–1513. I myself am currently preparing an English translation of the *miracula*.
- 21 In fact the text itself does not specify clearly that Zoe was from Kastoria, but this is apparent from the overall structure of the narrative, and is also attested by marginal notations in two manuscripts of the *Logos*, Lavra 1134 and 1573; see Tsames 1985: 580–1, crit. app.
- 22 Rigo 1993: 187 n. 144.
- 23 On illnesses cured at the shrine of Athanasios, see Talbot 1983: 17–19; for the Pege shrine, see Talbot 2002a: 222–8, esp. 223–5, and Efthymiades 2006–7.
- 24 For discussion of this subject in the middle Byzantine period, see Kazhdan 1984c.
- 25 Miller 1985: 199–200.
- 26 Cf., for example, Hippocrates, *De ossium natura*, 10.42 and 17.13 in Littré (1861): IX, 180, 192.
- 27 Cf., for example, Galen, *De symptomatum causis libri iii*, in Kühn (1824): VII, 195.12 and *passim* in *TLG*. Likewise in his *vita Isidori* (ed. Tsames 1985: ch. 76.3) Philotheos says that the ἱατρῶν παῖδες use the term νεφρίτις.
- 28 A particularly apt play on words, since the woman was a spinner.
- 29 On Xanthopoulos, see Talbot 2002b: 611–15; on Lazaropoulos, see Rosenqvist 1995.
- 30 As in Talbot 1983: chs 37, 56 and 60.
- 31 Talbot 1983: ch. 38.
- 32 Talbot 1983: ch. 39.
- 33 Talbot 1983: ch. 63. I should note that I have taken care to select passages that are the work of Theoktistos, and not copied from the tenth-century miracles of St Luke of Steiris (as are many of the miracles of Athanasios), but should point out that similar sentiments can be found in the tenth-century *vita* as well.
- 34 See *ODB*: s.v. omophoron.
- 35 See the helpful indices included in Tsames 1985: 595–623.

- 36 E.g. ἐφίσταται δὲ πῶς (ch. 121.8); τί τὸ ἐντεῦθεν (ch. 121.21); διατὶ καὶ γὰρ ἕτερον (ch. 122.22–3); and τί τὸ ἐξῆς (ch. 125.84).
- 37 E.g. ὃ τῶν καινῶν σου Χριστὲ θαυμασίων! (ch. 81.22) and ὃ Θεοῦ θαυμασίων (ch. 122.46).
- 38 τὸν τρόπον ἐπικίχης, χρυσοστίκτης τὴν τέχνην (ch. 108.1–2).
- 39 E.g. ἐξιᾶται καὶ ιατρὸν ὁ μέγας οὗτος ιατρὸς . . . (ch. 121.1); καθάπερ ἐπὶ τῶν αἰσθητῶς ιατρευομένων . . . οἱ τῆς θεραπείας τέως ἀναίσθητοι (ch. 123.31–2); τῶν συχνῶν . . . θαυμάτων τοῦ θαυμαστοῦ Γρηγορίου (ch. 122.13–14); μὴ δεδυνῆσθαι ἢ καὶ δυνάμενον (ch. 122.33).
- 40 πάσαν περιούσα τὴν πόλιν πυκνὰ περιεκτύπει (ch. 122.28); πειράζουσα μᾶλλον ἢ πιστεύουσα . . . (ch. 122.32); χρόνον . . . πλείστον παντοδαποῖς προσπαλαίων νοσήμασι (ch. 121.2–3); πληγὰς, σκωλήκων δὲ πλήθος ἀνασχεῖν τάς πληγὰς (ch. 121.4).
- 41 E.g. ἀνυμνούση καὶ . . . ἀνακηρυττούση (ch. 122.48–9).
- 42 *PLP*: nos. 6007, 6403, 21558, 23580, 6644.
- 43 Magdalino 1977: 277–9.
- 44 Cf. Miller 2003: 160.

CHAPTER TWENTY

WRITING FOR THE HEART

The spiritual literature of Byzantium



Joseph Munitiz

One of the most remarkable features that distinguishes the spiritual literature of Byzantium is that at regular intervals the need was felt to gather extracts or even whole texts together into anthologies. From the collection of “sayings” of the Desert Fathers in the sixth century, one passes to the vast collection, the *Sacra parallela* of John of Damascus in the eighth century (or to the even earlier *Pandektes* of Antiochos of St Sabas in the seventh century), then on to various other anthologies, like the great *Synagoge* of Paul of Evergetis in the eleventh century, the collections put together by John of Oxeia in the twelfth and, eventually, as late as the eighteenth century, to the influential *Philokalia*, an attempt to bring together the key spiritual texts of the Byzantine world.

Fortunately much work has been done on these collections. One pioneer scholar was a French *abbé*, Marcel Richard, when in charge of the Greek Section of the Institut de recherche et d’histoire de textes in Paris. Gifted with an unrivalled knowledge of Greek manuscripts, when asked to contribute the entry on Greek *florilegia* in the multi-volume *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (in course of publication at the time), he undertook an investigation of the Greek manuscript catalogues. He discovered many such works: ten belonging to the family of the *Hiera* (Τὰ ἱερά), or *Sacra parallela*, organized under the name of John of Damascus; at least ten more characterized by their combination of profane (pre-Christian) with religious texts, *loci communes* dealing with ethical and religious points (like “friendship”); and another dozen that can be loosely described as “monastic,” the most outstanding being the works of Paul of Evergetis, Nikon of the Black Mountain and John of Oxeia.¹ More needs to be said in particular about some of these collections, but it is as well to point out from the beginning that much of the material remains in manuscript form. Extensive work remains to be done on unpublished sources before one can form an authentic picture of the extent and influence of spiritual writings in the thousand-year span of Byzantine culture.

However, words can be slippery objects, and the word “spiritual” is a good example. It is unlikely that inhabitants of the Byzantine world would have used the word πνευματικός in relation to specific writings in the same way that we do today; for them Scripture was certainly “spiritual,” as were monks, especially confessors,

the sacraments and even objects (like the altar). The writings that we tend to classify as “spiritual” are more often entitled “ascetic,” or “mystic,” or even “gnostic” (as happens with the works of Diadochos of Photike: *κεφάλαια γνωστικά*). A favourite adjective to describe such writings is *νηπτικός*, with its emphasis on “sobriety.” We can be easily confused by the Byzantine tendency to extend “philosophy” to cover works of piety and devotion. For them “gnosis” and “theoria,” and of course “theologia,” came naturally to mind when we would use the word “spirituality.” It is through the practice of the *virtues*, as Byzantine spiritual writings constantly remind us, that one comes to the knowledge of God: “If you wish to be granted a mental vision of the divine you must first embrace a peaceful and quiet way of life, and devote your efforts to acquiring a knowledge of both yourself and God.”²

For anyone first approaching this type of writing, and wishing to catch something of its attraction and depth, the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* provide an unrivalled gateway. However, some help may be needed to cross the threshold. There are various types of collections: the so-called “Alphabetical-Anonymous” series and the “Systematic.” Still valuable is the work done on these by the German scholar Wilhelm Bousset (1923), but a French Jesuit, Jean-Claude Guy, was the first to establish reliable guidelines to these collections, and provided a complete edition and translation of the “Systematic Collection.”³ Clearly, the “Anonymous” section also follows roughly a systematic order,⁴ dealing with topics such as the need for stillness and self-control, endurance, discernment, avoiding judgement of others and ostentation, vigilance, mercy, obedience, humility, endurance and charity: however, as the English translator remarks, “The essence of the spirituality of the desert is that it was not taught but caught; it was a whole way of life” and also, “It is in some ways a vain exercise to select *Sayings* . . . It is even more dangerous to try to explain the desert tradition, for it is a tradition which is best understood from experience.”⁵

Similar to the collections of “sayings” of the Desert Fathers are a number of collections devoted to describing their lives: the so-called *Lausiac History* of Palladios (fifth century) and the anonymous *Lives of the Desert Fathers*.⁶ These prolong a tradition of hagiographical writing that may have begun with the most influential of all “lives” of the Desert Fathers, the *Life of St Antony the Great*, traditionally attributed to St Athanasios (fourth century).⁷ Outstanding in this category is the *Λειμών / Λειμωνάριον* (*Spiritual Meadow*)⁸ of John Moschos (early seventh century), extremely popular, but still awaiting a competent critical edition (and given the extreme complexity of the manuscript tradition likely to wait still longer). Between “sayings” and “lives” one should interpolate “stories,” the “pious tales” (“beneficial to the soul”, *ψυχωφελείς*, as the Byzantines liked to call them), which fill the *Spiritual Meadow*. Many such collections exist, such as those that appear under the name of Anastasios of Sinai,⁹ the healing miracles collected under the names of Cyrus and John,¹⁰ and at a later date (tenth century) those attributed to Paul of Monemvasia.¹¹

Of course the lives of other saints, not just of the “Desert Fathers,” form a distinctive and very large section of Byzantine spiritual literature. Here again a collection of major importance is to be found. In the tenth century Symeon, commonly known as *Metaphrastes* (the “Translator”), attempted to rephrase all known saints’ lives in a style which he thought more appropriate to the culture of his age, characterized by Paul Lemerle as “Byzantine humanism.”¹² Originally these would have formed a

ten-volume *Menologion*, containing some 150 texts.¹³ Many are available in the volumes of the *Acta sanctorum* published over many centuries by the Bollandists,¹⁴ where it is possible to compare some with the earlier texts. Other “menologia” (characterized by the classification of saints’ lives according to the months of the year) existed, along with “synaxaria” that gave brief lives of the saints.¹⁵ One of the most important *synaxaria* was published by Hippolyte Delehaye, a twentieth-century Bollandist, who contributed several key works to our knowledge of Byzantine hagiography (e.g. his work on the stylite saints, and that on legends in hagiography).¹⁶ To find one’s way through the largely unexplored jungle of hagiographical collections – along with the homiletic tradition that was regularly combined with saints’ lives – the most important work is by the German scholar Albert Ehrhard (1937–52).¹⁷

Although in the case of some outstanding preachers¹⁸ their sermons and homilies would be gathered under their own names – John Chrysostom in the fourth century and Andrew of Crete in the eighth century are the most obvious examples – the survival of many such works has to be attributed to the liturgical collections (μηναια) in which they were placed, usually to celebrate a feast: these could be panegyrics of saints (πανηγυρικά), with sermons on the Virgin forming a special category, or comments on biblical texts, and would have been intercalated between Scriptural readings. A ninth-century example is a manuscript from Thessalonika which contains sixty sermons drawn from the leading Church Fathers: “c’est tout un défilé de patristique orientale qui était introduit dans le cycle des lectures liturgiques non-bibliques.”¹⁹ It is worth noting that although many sermons and homilies passed into the monastic domain (and are preserved largely in monastic liturgical texts), many saw the light of day addressed to lay audiences and helped to stimulate lay spirituality: the very word ὁμιλία retains a link with its root meaning of “conversation” or “talk,” a bishop conversing with his congregation. The same holds for the sermons entitled κατηχητικά, “religious instructions,” which also found their way into the later collections.

Undoubtedly it is the *Synagoge*, put together by Paul of Evergetis around the year 1050, which best represents the medieval phenomenon of collected spiritual texts. This large work, which divides into four books, has survived, at least partially, in more than eighty manuscripts, an indication of its popularity over many centuries. It was printed by Nikodemos Hagiorites in Venice (late eighteenth century), and is now easily available in five volumes thanks to various Athenian reprints.²⁰ An analysis of the sources quoted provides a reliable list of the authors who dominated the spiritual reading of medieval monastic communities.²¹ The *Gerontikon* (or “Sayings of the Fathers”) easily tops the list, and along with that source, and similar to it, are the works of Antiochos, himself the author of an important collection (the *Pandektes*, mentioned earlier),²² Palladios, the letters of Barsanouphios and John, and the treatises attributed to Mark the Monk/Hermit. All can be grouped together as representing the “desert” tradition stemming from Egypt and Palestine. With them stands the *Vita* of the Egyptian St Synkletike, quoted quite frequently in the *Synagoge*, especially as this life “represents almost the total sum of female contributions to the work.”²³

But the second most frequently quoted author (after the *Gerontikon*) is Ephrem the Syrian (fourth century); many questions still surround the authenticity of the

works in Greek attributed to this very influential writer,²⁴ but some remarks are justified. His works are proof of the debt owed by Byzantine spirituality to earlier non-Greek sources, in particular the Syriac writers. The presence in some of his texts of Scripture references drawn from the *Diatesseron* confirms this, and should not surprise any reader who has admired the liturgical hymns of Romanos the Melode (sixth century). Ephrem's Greek works, whether authentic or not, lay great stress on self-denial, on compunction (e.g. "how the soul should pray to God with tears" and "on the dangers of laughter"), on temptations, on the Final Judgement, on the passions and virtues, but also on the Theotokos. Many of the sermons are written in a rhythmic prose, while a great number of his works take the form of liturgical hymns. Another writer represented in the *Synagoge*, Isaiah of Skete, a monk in Palestine, resembles Ephrem in giving a subtle analysis of evil thoughts (λογισμοί) along with discernment (διάκρισις).

The *Synagoge* draws on a second very popular spiritual writer hailing from areas outside the narrowed limits of the medieval Byzantine empire: Isaac the Syrian, bishop of Nineveh (seventh century). He provides a link with much earlier writers. These texts make vividly present the Christ-centred aspect of much Byzantine spiritual writing and its stress on the Passion as a remedy for human sinfulness. It is fascinating to find that the well-known Latin *Anima Christi* prayer had its forerunners, as the following makes clear:

Have mercy, Lord! Have mercy, Lord! Have mercy, Lord, my Jesus!
 My sinful heart you know full well; I pray you to forgive me.
 Accept the cry that from within, despite sin's bitter venom,
 To you my soul with heart-felt pleas would raise in deep contrition.
 By all the passion that you bore, lance clean my soul's foul passions;
 By all your wounds salve now the wounds that my mind has self-inflicted.
 By our own blood with art divine make pure the blood in my veins
 And graft my members to your frame united to the Godhead.

This is a very free version of a twelfth-century prayer found in the life of St Cyril of Philea (d. 1110) by his disciple, Nicolas.²⁵ But this prayer is simply a rhythmic version of a prayer in prose to be found among the works of Isaac, who in his turn was drawing on John of Dalyatha, another Syriac writer active in Iraq in the eighth century. Isaac's devotion to the cross is evident:

The cross is the gate of mysteries; here takes place the entrance of the mind into the knowledge of the heavenly mysteries. The knowledge of the cross is hidden within the sufferings of the cross . . . The greater place the sufferings of Christ take in us, the greater becomes our consolation in Christ. Consolation means contemplation which is psychic sight. Sight gives birth to consolation.²⁶

The hint at some higher "sight" of the soul²⁷ reminds one that behind many of these writers, both Syriac and Greek, stand the imposing figures of both Evagrius Pontikos and Origen, both condemned in 553 at the ecumenical council of Constantinople and therefore not to be mentioned explicitly by so orthodox a compiler as Paul of Evergetis. In the case of Evagrius, the most directly influential of these two writers,

diverse strands are distinguishable in his teaching: first, an emphasis on the “practical” (τὰ πρακτικά), the way and the need to purify the soul; and alongside this ascetical teaching, another set of instructions aimed at instructing the soul in true knowledge (τὰ γνωστικά),²⁸ which can have reference either to the “natural” or to the “theological.” Where Evagrius appeared dangerous to the Council Fathers was in his metaphysical teaching, both with regard to human souls (which he suggests have some pre-existence) and with reference to the nature of Jesus Christ (presented as an “intellect” or νοῦς λογικός). However, his teaching on prayer, solidly founded on mystical experience, opened up the possibility of the soul being granted the “light,” which he defines as the “contemplation of the Trinity,” θεωρία τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος.²⁹ However, the key authors insisting on “light” mysticism are missing from the *Synagoge*, as will be discussed below.

Two writers, both undoubtedly Greek-speakers by birth, are worth introducing at this point as both were used extensively by Paul of Evergetis and both depend massively on Evagrius.³⁰ The earlier of the two, Diadochos (fifth century), was bishop in Photike in Epiros (northern Greece), the other, Maximos (seventh century) the Confessor (so-called because he “confessed” to the true faith despite torture), is said to have been born in Constantinople.³¹ In the *Synagoge* they are both represented by their “Centuries,” a literary genre much favoured by Byzantine spiritual writers: 100 relatively short sentences are strung together, occasionally linked by subject matter, each sentence being suitable for meditation/reflection and often enigmatic or allusive in tone so that the reader is required to reread and labour to get at the meaning: “We have hidden certain things, and camouflaged others, so as to avoid throwing to the dogs what is holy,” as Evagrius remarks.³²

Diadochos is reacting to some extent against Messalianism, with its excessive emphasis on human unworthiness coupled with teaching on the need for emotional and sensual experience in prayer. This heretical movement, probably introduced from Syria, had infected at least one version of the Makarian homilies (a collection very popular in monastic circles). But Diadochos was seeking “a precise theory of both the state of the fallen human intellect and the nature of God’s saving intervention.”³³ There are attitudes that may strike the modern reader as quaint (such as his suspicions about bathing³⁴), but his robust good sense is joined to a real feel for the deeper levels of prayer:

Whenever the soul is in the abundance of its *natural* fruits, it makes its psalmody louder and wants to pray *aloud* more. But when it is activated by the Holy Spirit, it sings and prays with all relaxation and gladness alone *in a private place in the heart*.

(my italics)³⁵

He is alive to the need for discernment in prayer, and for a spiritual life rooted in the love of Jesus Christ.

Drawing on Diadochos,³⁶ Maximos, justly regarded as the greatest of Byzantine spiritual writers, devotes four *Centuries*³⁷ to ἀγάπη (poorly translated as “Charity”), included (at least in part) in the *Synagoge*. But equally important are his *Liber asceticus*, his *Mystagogia* and his *Commentary on the Our Father*. Yet even his dogmatic works, like his *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, are deeply “spiritual,” or

ψυχοφελής, as the Greeks say. His humility³⁸ combines with a human tenderness, as Irénée Hausherr showed, with his customary perspicacity, when he entitled his book on Maximos *De la tendresse pour soi à la charité*.³⁹ Maximos acknowledges the fallen human state but is convinced of its innate goodness and openness to regeneration with Christ. The “deification” (θέωσις) by the goodness of God of what is born human is the highlight of the optimistic teaching of Maximos:

One can say that the divine and the human serve one another as models (παρδείγματα): the divine out of pure benevolence becomes human for the sake of the human in so far as the human, strengthened by love, becomes divine (ἐαυτὸν τῷ Θεῷ . . . ἀπεθέωσε); and the human is lifted up in spirit by the divine towards the unknown (πρὸς τὸ ἄγνωστον [var. reading γνωστόν]), in so far as the human displays with virtuous living the divine that is, by nature, invisible.⁴⁰

With such packed sentences as these Maximos opens new vistas for the soul. Such teaching provides a pointer also to the assiduity with which Maximos had read the works circulating under the name of Dionysios the Areopagite. In this he broadened the horizon, because writers like John Klimakos seem to have studiously avoided these brilliant, but intoxicating, works. Going beyond the “intellectualism” of Evagrius, Maximos “introduces a theme from Denys the Areopagite: that in its final union the intellect is taken out of itself – its love is ‘ecstatic’ (the Greek means ‘standing outside oneself’).”⁴¹ As he notes in one of his chapters:

God who is *beyond fullness* did not bring creatures into being
out of any need of His,
but that He might enjoy *their proportionate participation* in Him,
and that He might delight in His works
seeing them delighted and ever insatiably satisfied
with the one who is inexhaustible.⁴²

(my italics and spacing)

While insisting that God cannot be “grasped” (ἄληπτον), Maximos maintains that a “proportionate participation” is possible for the human in the divine, even calling it “identity by grace” (ἡ κατὰ χάριν ταυτότης).⁴³

Among other works used by Paul of Evergetis, the *Dialogues* that circulated under the name of Pope Gregory the Great deserve special mention as they illustrate the breadth, cultural and geographical, of his sources. As with so many of the works mentioned so far, considerable problems of authenticity⁴⁴ surround this famous and very popular work: supposedly a translation from the (sixth-century) Latin by the last of the Greek popes, Zacharias (eighth century), the *Dialogues* recount the life of St Benedict along with many other Italian saints.⁴⁵

Before passing on to the *Philokalia*, a reflection on the authors not mentioned so far will help to complete the picture of middle Byzantine spirituality. Some of these omissions from the *Synagoge* become more intelligible when one recognizes that this *florilegium* is far from being a random collection of texts, and is also not the only work for which Paul of Evergetis was responsible. The *four* books (probably

echoing, like the *Centuries on Love* of Maximos, the number “four” of the Gospels) each contain fifty themes (ὑποθέσεις); they are constructed with the training of a monk in mind. Book One concentrates on general principles of monastic asceticism, Book Two on monastic customs and requirements, Book Three deals with the interior dispositions, while Book Four outlines the way of perfection along with the duties of priests, pastors and teachers. One of his principles of omission leaps out at once: most of the “great” patristic writers are not there – Basil of Caesarea, the Cappadocians, John Chrysostom, Dionysios the Areopagite, John Klimakos, John Moschos, Dorotheos of Gaza⁴⁶ – but presumably because Paul assumed that these works were so well known that they would be available in any case. Also missing are any extracts from the Studite corpus, the great collection of monastic instructions pronounced by Theodore for his monks in the early ninth century. In this case one should note that Paul produced not only the *Synagoge* but also a liturgical homiliary, known as the *Katechetikon*, which still awaits publication.⁴⁷ It contains liturgical readings for the morning office for each day of the year; texts are selected from Maximos, Pseudo-Makarios, Dorotheos of Gaza, Ephrem, Mark the Monk, Neilos (= Evagrius), John of Karpathos, Diadochos of Photike and above all Theodore the Studite. In the latter case Paul exercises subtle editorial techniques to adapt the sermons to the perennial needs of a monastic community – with such success that numerous copies of the *Katechetikon* survive, one adapted to the needs of a female community.⁴⁸

Perhaps more significant is a further omission (noted many years ago by Irenée Hausherr) of any extracts from Paul’s contemporary, the very influential spiritual author Symeon the New Theologian (d. 1022).⁴⁹ Certainly an outstanding writer, his lyrical religious poems cannot fail to attract, while his *Chapters* (Κεφάλαια) contain catecheses for his monks that display great originality. Dominant in his teaching is the importance of “light,”⁵⁰ since God reveals himself as light, a light that Symeon claims to have seen (perhaps encouraged by the writings of the Pseudo-Makarios). It is such autobiographical assertions that make his writings so lively,⁵¹ but also aroused the suspicions of his hearers. Thus it seems that Paul deliberately refrained from associating himself with an individualism that could not be reconciled with the anonymity of his own approach, with its constant putting forward of tradition.⁵²

Although the great collection the *Philokalia* was published so late (1782), it provides a ready means of access to the whole of medieval Byzantine spiritual writing, including in its scope authors from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries. Its influence has been enormous, partly because of the numerous Slavonic, Russian and Romanian versions that soon appeared.⁵³ Of the thirty-eight authors or texts represented⁵⁴ less than half of them are to be found in the *Synagoge*. The reason is not hard to find: the fourteenth century saw the appearance of a major new contribution to Byzantine spiritual writing – the phenomenon of Palamism. The two compilers of the *Philokalia*, Bishop Makarios of Corinth and Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain (or “Hagiorites”), were working with a set purpose in mind: they wanted to propagate the “prayer of the heart” (the well-known method of prayer known as the “Jesus Prayer”⁵⁵) and the hesychast approach to prayer associated with Palamism.⁵⁶

Gregory Palamas (born in 1296) spent some thirty years as a monk, mainly on Athos, until appointed metropolitan of Thessalonika (1347). Gifted with a ready pen he composed first a saint’s life (1334), then numerous apologetic and expository

works, some more directly on prayer, others on theological topics, where he developed his theory – in particular that of the vision of uncreated divine light – that provoked so much controversy. It is perhaps ironic⁵⁷ that the major exponent of Palamite teaching has presented his theological and dogmatic speculations, where serious questions can be raised, as his major contribution, while playing down his mystical gifts: “Esprit éminemment dogmatique . . . , [Palamas] sut traduire en concepts doctrinaux la tradition spirituelle du monachisme byzantin”;⁵⁸ and earlier, “Palamas . . . ne fut aucunement un mystique personnel, comme Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, et encore moins un visionnaire, mais un spéculative et un dogmaticien.”⁵⁹ However, his more directly spiritual works, even if they are not openly autobiographical (like those of Symeon), testify to the experience and depth of his inner life.

Grouped around Palamas in the *Philokalia*, either as predecessors or as followers, are a number of important spiritual writers. Symeon the New Theologian has already been mentioned, and has an important place, denied him in the *Synagoge*. Similarly Niketas Stethatos, the disciple of Symeon who composed the biography of his master, is included with his *Centuries . . . Practical, Gnostic and Theological*, each dedicated to a different stage in the spiritual life. Also there is a thirteenth-century monk, Nikephoros, surnamed the Hesychast or the Hagiorite; he was the first to write explicitly of the breathing technique to be used with the Jesus prayer:

Sit, recollect your spirit, introduce it – I mean your spirit – into your nostrils; this is the path that the breath takes to reach the heart. Push it down, force it to descend into your heart along with the air that you have breathed in. When it is there, you will see the joy that will follow.⁶⁰

A similar text, printed under the name of Symeon the New Theologian but probably also by Nikephoros, adds details about the body posture:

Then, pressing your chin against your breast, direct the corporeal eye but also all your spirit to the centre of your stomach, that is on your navel, compress the air that passes through your nose so that you hold your breath, and mentally search within yourself the place of your heart, there where all your soul’s powers congregate. At first you will find only darkness and a stubborn lack of transparency, but if you persevere, and if you practise this exercise night and day, you will find – what wonder! – a limitless happiness.⁶¹

Less dramatic are the acrostic chapters (one is quoted above⁶²) that come under the name of Theognostos (c. 1254) and give no hint of later Palamitic tendencies:

While still in the flesh, do not try to plumb the inner depths of intelligible realities, even if the noetic power of your soul is drawn towards them by its purity. For unless the bodiless part of man, now mingled with breath and blood, is released from the grossness of materiality and enters the realm of the intelligible realities, it cannot grasp these realities properly. You should therefore prepare yourself to issue from this material world as though from some dark second maternal womb, and to enter that immaterial and radiant realm, joyfully

glorifying our Benefactor who carries us through death towards the fulfilment of our hopes.⁶³

A disciple of Nikephoros the Hesychast, Theoleptos of Philadelphia (d. 1326) is important as the first spiritual father of Princess Irene Eulogia Choumnaina, and thus a link with the many women who devoted themselves to the spiritual life.⁶⁴ This young widow of the *despot* John Palaeologos, abbess of a convent in Constantinople, was a noted anti-Palamite; she befriended Akindynos, who became her second spiritual father.⁶⁵ If nothing else this fact indicates that hesychastic prayer was not a preserve of the Palamites.

However, strongly in the line of Palamas is a key figure, the venerable old man Gregory of Sinai (1255–1346); he is said to have brought to Athos from his travels in Palestine, Sinai and Cyprus the teaching of a new form of prayer: for him, the spiritual life consisted in rediscovering, experimentally, one's baptismal "force" or "energy" and seeing the "light." This is done through the repetition of the Jesus Prayer along with holding one's breath. Of course Gregory is well aware of the illusions and errors that such techniques can provoke, and carefully warns his disciples against them. Nevertheless one can understand that some critics reacted strongly against such teaching. To complicate matters further, it is known that on Mt Athos at this time (c. 1340) there were condemnations for Bogomilism and Messalianism,⁶⁶ even if the majority of the monks there were "God-loving men, the naturally pious, the simple Christians, those who own no property, who are not meddlesome, who think that heaven is for their souls what the earth is for their bodies."⁶⁷

Later fourteenth-century figures included in the *Philokalia* are the brothers Kallistos and Ignatius Xanthopoulos, and two other monks named "Kallistos," all strongly in the Palamite line, for example repeating the teaching that in prayer one can attain vision of the light of Mt Tabor which provides direct contact with the divine "energy." An even later supporter of Palamas is Symeon of Thessalonike (d. 1429); his commentary on the liturgy is important as both a historical and a devotional work, but the extract chosen for the *Philokalia* is from a treatise on prayer.

The collection closes with seven short texts translated into modern Greek, an indication that by the nineteenth century some Greek readers of the *Philokalia* would have had difficulty in coping with the more classical Greek of the medieval period. But this linguistic update may also indicate that the two compilers intended their collection to be available for a wider public, not just the monastic communities of Mt Athos. This preoccupation with a lay readership is evident elsewhere in the collection.⁶⁸ However, one important lay figure not included in the *Philokalia*, but remarkable as an exemplar of the devout layman, is Nicolas Cabasilas: his treatise, *On Life in Christ*, is in many ways typical of the best spiritual writing in the Byzantine empire, and it makes plain some constants in the Byzantine way of thinking about the spiritual: "the compenetration of the present world with that to come; the existence in us of spiritual powers of feeling; the close relationship between the Christian and Jesus Christ; the human contribution needed to this union with Christ; a love that is pure."⁶⁹

The advantage of turning to these collections as a way of providing a path through

the rich expanse of Byzantine spiritual writings is that the choice of authors is made for us; the maps have been drawn up over the centuries and the contours have been checked and double checked. Occasionally on referring to the main features of these maps some hints have been dropped, and some directions indicated, but the option was made to avoid any ambitious plan of synthesis. Such syntheses do exist, some of them associated with great names,⁷⁰ and these have their uses. A problem they tend to raise is that of contrasting East and West. How helpful such an approach can be seems to the present writer very doubtful. Undoubtedly spiritual writings in Greek and Latin provoke distinctive sensations, just as do the contrasting styles of Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Avila writing in English and Spanish. It is equally certain that different authors will appeal to different readers.⁷¹ The astonishing fact remains that if one is prepared to listen, the voice of God can be heard coming through these different accents – and that alone is what makes them so wonderful, and also justifies their being called “writings for the heart.”

NOTES

- 1 Richard 1962: 475–512.
- 2 Theognostos 1981: 360.
- 3 Guy 1962 for a summary of his research; see Guy 1993, 2003, 2005 for his posthumous edition of the Greek text with a French translation.
- 4 A partial translation: Ward 1975.
- 5 Ward 1975: xii and xviii.
- 6 Full details available in CPG 5620 (*Historia monachorum*), and CPG 6036 (*Historia Lausiaca*).
- 7 CPG 2101; note that the *Supplementum* gives the reference to the critical edition by G. J. M. Bartelink in the *Sources Chrétiennes* series, no. 400, Paris, 1994.
- 8 It is worth noting that the Greek title feels no need to add the word “spiritual.”
- 9 They formed the subject of a doctoral thesis in Paris by André Binggeli in 2001, and it is hoped that they will be published soon.
- 10 Published in Spain by N. Fernández Marcos 1975.
- 11 Wortley 1996; the same translator has published the *Spiritual Meadow* 1992.
- 12 Lemerle 1986: 337–9.
- 13 Ševčenko 1990.
- 14 So-called after their Jesuit founder, Jan van Bolland (1596–1665); over the centuries this group of scholars has published critical editions of lives of saints, beginning with the series known as the *Acta sanctorum*; they also publish the journal *Analecta Bollandiana*, and supplementary volumes (*Subsidia hagiographica*) dedicated to hagiography.
- 15 Noret 1968: 21–3.
- 16 Listed in the References under his name.
- 17 A useful index to the manuscripts mentioned by Ehrhard has been published by Perria 1979.
- 18 Cunningham and Allen 1998 is a very useful guide for outstanding preaching activity in Byzantium during the first millennium.
- 19 Grégoire 1969: 609.
- 20 Solignac 1984, and for a brief overview, Citterio 2002: 921–2; the Belfast Evergetis Project is making available detailed information in volumes published in the Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations Series (see vols 6.1 and 6.2).
- 21 Wortley 1994: 314.
- 22 Antiochos witnessed the Arab invasion of Palestine, and his collection was intended to be a portable library for the monks fleeing from their monasteries.
- 23 Wortley 1994: 316.
- 24 For proof of this, see Geerard 1983–7: II, 366–8 (CPG 3905). The only major editions of his works are still those of the eighteenth-century scholars E. Thwaites (Oxford, 1709) and J. S. Assemani (Rome, 1732). At least one volume of the ΕΡΓΑ Ἐφραίμ τοῦ Σύρου has been republished (using

the text of Assemani, but with an accompanying translation into modern Greek), in Athens (1988, 1995).

- 25 Sargologos 1964: 71–2. A complete translation appeared in Munitiz 1974: 171–2.
- 26 Wensinck 1923: 365.
- 27 A treatise, called “Nestorian” by its editor (who also provides a Latin translation), may also be by Isaac and stresses even more strongly the mystic aspects: “And when we approach and gaze on the cross, we rise up mystically by our intellect to heaven, as though we had some incorporeal vision, independent of sight,” ed. Ploeg 1943: 125.
- 28 Guillaumont 1960: 1738.
- 29 Hausherr 1953: 1776, 1781; this masterly exposition of contemplative prayer “chez les Grecs et autres Orientaux chrétiens” has not been surpassed.
- 30 Somewhat different is the case of Evagrius works that passed under the name of Neilos of Ankyra: Guérard 1982: 356.
- 31 Dalmais 1980: 847; unfortunately information on his early life is unreliable; on his later trials, see Allen and Neil 1999.
- 32 Quoted by Guillaumont 1960: 1738; cf. PG 40: 1221C.
- 33 Rutherford 2000: 4. Valuable information available in des Places 1955, who gives a summary of the polemical purpose and spiritual teaching of Diadochos.
- 34 Rutherford 2000: 64–6 (§52).
- 35 Rutherford 2000: 96–8 (§73).
- 36 des Places 1982: 30–5.
- 37 Available in English: see Berthold 1985: 35–87.
- 38 Excusing himself from further writing he closes his *Mystagogia* with the words: “Still tossed, as if by a savage sea, by the great tempest of my passions, and still far from the divine haven of *apatheia*, being uncertain of the end that awaits me, I do not want to have as my accusers not only my deeds but also my written words” (PG 91: 717C).
- 39 Hausherr 1952.
- 40 *Ambigua* 10, PG 91: 1113B10–C2; Dalmais 1980: 846 referring to this passage reads “vers l’inconnu,” and this is supported by the Latin, “rapi ad incognitum”; however, the Migne edition gives only the variant reading which is clearly a copyist’s error. Incidentally, the *Ambigua* were written to help friends understand “ambiguous” passages of Gregory of Nazianzus. To explore further the theme of “deification,” see Russell 2004.
- 41 Louth 1996: 43.
- 42 Berthold 1985: 67, *Third Century on Love*, ch. 46.
- 43 See Hausherr 1953: 1836, quoting *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, qu. 25 (PG 90: 333A); the phrase reappears in Scholion 11 to this text. Many of Maximus’ works are now available in critical editions in the CCSG, among them this work edited by Laga and Steel 1980: 163, 171.
- 44 Clark 1987 calls in question the overall authenticity of the work, arguing that some ingenious writer has interwoven genuine fragments of Gregory with many legendary elements.
- 45 For an English translation, see Zimmerman 1959.
- 46 Wortley 1994: 323, has drawn up this list.
- 47 Crostini 1998 gives the most up-to-date study of the *Katechetikon*, and there are hopes that the sections deriving from Paul himself will eventually be published.
- 48 See Crostini 2002b.
- 49 See Hausherr 1957.
- 50 Hausherr 1953: 1851–3.
- 51 Very indicative is the title of Maloney 1975, *The Mystic of Fire and Life*.
- 52 See Crostini 2002a: 126–8.
- 53 A handy summary is given in Citterio 2002: 919, and for those wishing to see the relationship between the different versions, see Conticello and Citterio 2002.
- 54 A full analysis of the first edition is available in Ware 1984: 1339–43.
- 55 A succinct definition is to be found in ODCC: 875.
- 56 The “pocket-book” version of the *Philokalia*, put together by the distinguished French scholar Jean Gouillard, is faithful to this same purpose: Gouillard 1953. For a wider version of the purpose of the *Philokalia* see Ware 1984: 1348–52; Spanish readers will find helpful the synthesis of spirituality based on the *Philokalia* in Melloni 1995.

- 57 This has been pointed out by the editor of Akindynos, a major critic of Palamas' theology: see Nadal 2006: 136, from where the quotations of Meyendorff are taken.
- 58 Meyendorff 1959: 172; Meyendorff contributed the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* entry on Palamas, vol. 12, 1984: 81–107, an excellent introduction to Palamas' work.
- 59 Meyendorff 1953: 119.
- 60 Gouillard 1953: 151. In his Introductory remarks (p. 154) Gouillard emphasizes that such teaching is quite foreign to the genuine mysticism of Symeon.
- 61 Gouillard 1953: 161. This passage is the key to the abusive name ὀμφαλόψυχοι ("having souls in their navels") given by Barlaam to the hesychasts: Nadal 2006: 132.
- 62 See n. 2.
- 63 Theognostos 1981: 374.
- 64 See Laurent 1930.
- 65 Nadal 2006: 28–83.
- 66 Bogomilism: for a general definition, see ODCC: 219–20, but the pejorative adjective "Bogomil" was used to cover a wide variety of deviations; for Athos at this time, see Rigo 1989.
- 67 Quoted by Nadal 2006: 143. These words were written by Akindynos in a letter to Barlaam urging him to stop his campaign against the Athonite hesychasts (Hero 1983: 24–5).
- 68 As pointed out by Bishop Kallistos in his *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* article: Ware 1984: 1348–9.
- 69 Salaville 1953: 6, where he is quoting from a study of Cabasilas by Gabriel Horn published in 1922.
- 70 Some examples: Vladimir Lossky 1944 (Russian), Giorgios Mantzarides 1994 (Greek), Dumitru Staniloae 2002 (Romanian), Tomaš Špidlik 1978, 1988 (Czech Roman Catholic cardinal), all classic authorities. For a recent attempt see McGuckin 2001.
- 71 For an interesting attempt to facilitate the "encounter" between different religious attitudes see Cheetham 2007. A similar eirenic approach is to be found in Louth and Casaday 2006.

PART III

HEAVEN ON EARTH

Byzantine art and architecture

General statements on Byzantium's contribution to European art and architecture have not changed profoundly in the past century. In surveys it is still held that Byzantium's most important contribution to art was the icon. After the so-called Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843, which brought to an end the second period of Iconoclasm in Byzantium, hieratic images of Christ and the saints became essential devotional tools, mediators of the sacred, in the home and particularly within churches. To what extent that had been central to worship before that date, and how far the contemporary accounts skew the nature of the debate over icon veneration, is a matter of some scholarly controversy. Engaging in that discussion, to which she has already contributed a major new interpretation of the icon of the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), in a sophisticated essay elegant in its prose and concision, Bissera Pentcheva presents a simple but revelatory argument: the icon is not the same in Constantinople as on Mt Sinai or elsewhere; and Iconoclasm should not be understood as a period during which icons were destroyed, but rather as one when the nature of icons was debated.

In churches throughout the Byzantine World after 843, the life of Christ was succinctly rehearsed in a cycle of liturgical festival icons emphasizing the Incarnation, Passion and Easter. Painted icons of the same subjects gradually came to take fixed positions on the icon screen (*iconostasis*) separating the sanctuary from the nave. Complementing a centralized liturgy, early Byzantine architects developed a centralized, light-filled space surmounted by a dome. In Chapter 22, Vasileios Marinis addresses liturgical space, demonstrating that Byzantine church architecture developed in response to changing liturgical practices, but certainly did not establish a one-size-fits-all model. The cross-in-square-type church that came to dominate after the ninth century, Marinis agrees with Cyril Mango, developed in a monastic context, where it suited a smaller congregation that need not be segregated. It became popular for a number of reasons, not least of which was its rudimentary structural engineering: it could be produced by skilled builders and masons without the need for elaborate plans.

The main apse, the bema, housed the main altar, and apsed spaces flanked it. The cross-in-square type could also be extended by the addition of exonarthexes and

numerous chapels or *parekklesia*. Marinis links architectural spaces with the rituals performed in them, elucidating the functions of core and auxiliary elements of middle and late Byzantine churches. He articulates briefly but clearly the development of the rites that took place within the bema, the *prothesis* to its north and *diakonikon* to its south. His examples are chosen from across the empire, but at core he demonstrates his unparalleled knowledge of the monastery *tou Libos* and its two churches, the early tenth-century north church that acquired six subsidiary chapels, and the late thirteenth-century south church, which became a mausoleum for the Palaiologoi.

A pattern for the display and use of icons in mosaic and fresco was established, arranged in a descending hierarchy of portrait images from Christ the Pantokrator at the apex of the central dome to the ordered ranks of the saints in the vaults of the aisles and narthex. This was regarded, in turn, as a model for earthly order, *taxis*. *Taxis*, which can be translated most generally as “order,” was the concept upon which Byzantine imperial ideology was founded, and the fundamental principle by which the empire’s institutions functioned. The term appears in numerous contexts, where it can be translated into English as “rank,” “class,” “way of life,” “etiquette,” “precedence” or “hierarchy.” It can also mean “government bureau,” or “body of troops.” But in each case it refers to a practice or an organ of state functioning correctly, that is, according to prescribed guidelines, with “order.”

In the earthly sphere, for affairs to operate correctly and with order, the emperor must act as vicegerent for Christ, and subordinate Christian kings would enjoy his grace. Society was ordered to reflect the order of heaven, and earthly societies were arranged into a “hierarchy of states.” The Byzantine inheritance from late antiquity, that earthly arrangements reflect heavenly realities, is the subject of a wonderfully rich chapter by Warren Woodfin, who shows how the image of the emperor was never, in Byzantine art, entirely mimetic of Christ, who was presented in late antique dress. The emperor donned his ceremonial *loros*, and whereas like Christ he might be flanked by angels and saints, nonetheless his status as a servant of Christ prevented exact synonymity. Emperors might also resemble archangels and saints, who in imperial art took on roles as senior courtiers. Ecclesiastical hierarchies were more rigidly displayed; they developed later and were prone to escalation. In their liturgical vestments, by the end of the twelfth century, bishops and priests administered not simply in the person of Christ, they wore his person upon themselves, becoming living symbols of Christ as they performed the liturgy, the manifestation of order.

In Chapter 24, Henry Maguire turns *taxis* on its head. While Byzantine art, sacred and imperial, was produced according to strict conventions, there were “other icons,” reflecting a world of innovation, novelty and an absence of control, of *ataxia*. Mimes and street entertainers mimicked the liturgy in performances now lost to us, but in the world of visual art some traces have remained – ivory and bone boxes, ceramics – which Maguire explores in the categories “innovation, nudity, sexuality and abandon.” We are introduced to a world of protruding bottoms, scatological humour and an emperor happy to call himself the “bishop of Colonville.” Lovers are depicted in the manner of the *Theotokos* and the infant Christ, maternal love substituted for erotic love.

Robert Ousterhout (Chapter 25), like Maguire, explores texts and images in his reconstruction of medieval Constantinople, which is “today more the realm of the

philologist rather than of the archaeologist.” One is returned to the world of order, where Constantinople is the new or second Rome, its seven hills and fourteen districts mirroring those of the city on the Tiber. Equally, and again like Rome, it was a New Troy, but also a New Jerusalem. It was everything but itself, until it was that and all of the above, unchallenged in the Christian world as a centre of secular and sacred power, a repository of 3,600 relics from at least 476 saints, including most importantly in the heart of the imperial palace, at the Pharos chapel, the relics of the Passion of Christ. Ousterhout traces the transition of the cityscape and its structures, focusing, for example, on the Myrelaion (Bodrum Camii), and the less well-known but excavated church of St Euphemia, originally part of a fifth-century aristocratic palace, whose hexagonal hall became home to the relics of Euphemia and was later, perhaps much later, converted into a church. A late thirteenth-century renovation saw the church redecorated with paintings depicting the saint’s life. The most significant development of the twelfth century, the Pantokrator complex, has been explored most fully by Ousterhout, and he offers a neat summary of his principal findings, alongside some compelling insights into the Chora (Kariye Camii).

Through all its existence, Constantinople was defined by its walls, built by Constantine, replaced by Theodosius, and renovated and expanded frequently thereafter. The Great Palace was itself given a fortification wall in the tenth century, with a fortified gate facing east. It was now a bastion within the city. In support of Ousterhout, Nikolas Bakirtzis (Chapter 26) points out the inconclusive nature of much research to date on Byzantine fortifications, since the buildings were constantly changing. Consequently, research must be firmly grounded in its archaeological context. Bakirtzis classifies fortifications according to the entities they protected, and deals in turn with: fortresses, towers and linear walls; the fortifications of towns and *kastra*; and the fortifications of large urban centres. He then turns to a detailed case study, of Thessalonika, modern Thessaloniki in Greece, surveying “the physical and literary evidence of repairs, additions and alterations” that together demonstrate “that protecting the city was a never-ending arduous practice that entailed rich investments on the part of Thessalonian society and its leaders.” The significance of the walls for defining the city, and of its gates as thresholds to the safety within, is drawn out, and pertinent inscriptions and apotropaic devices and designs – notably crosses – are considered. The use of spolia is shown to be more than practical salvage, but rather the use of the city’s past to create a more potent present. The system of fortified locations around Thessalonika is also surveyed.

Casting his gaze still further afield, in Chapter 27, Jonathan Shepard considers how secular and sacred models were communicated to Byzantium’s neighbours, both near and far. Shepard reminds us that Byzantine builders in stone provided expertise in the construction for the Khazars of an ephemeral fortress at Sarkel, but also of other secular monuments, including a bathhouse. Shepard explores the activities of Byzantine builders and craftsmen more broadly, as they were despatched abroad following requests by various “barbarians,” and whose handiwork emulated what one might find in Constantinople. The construction of a palace, for example that of the Ostrogoth Theodoric at Ravenna, or the installation of mosaics such as those in the Great Mosque of Damascus, might be interpreted both as a symbol of cultural superiority by the donor, and in quite the opposite manner as tribute by the recipient. As in his 2006 essay, “Byzantium’s Overlapping Circles,” Shepard makes

sophisticated use of anthropological theory, notably that of Mary Helms, to explore the connections between the “superordinate centre,” Constantinople, and the elites of the acquisitional cultures, for whom extraordinary craftsmanship opened a channel to the divine. “Through such appropriation, [a foreign potentate] might create a focus of veneration and worship, demonstrable to subject-populations and visitors largely on his own terms, an abidingly sacral centre rather than merely the family seat.” Justinian was the imperial builder par excellence, whose achievement was celebrated in masonry, inscriptions and, at great length, by Prokopios. His builders travelled far and wide, to Lazica in the Caucasus and to Saʿa in Yemen to “renew . . . the Christian church.” His Hagia Sophia would serve as a model five centuries hence, for Iaroslav of Kiev, whose cathedral church took the same name in the 1040s. Other works of the 1070s and 1080s, surely to be attributed to Byzantine craftsmen, are to be found throughout the lands of Rus, notably at the Kievan Caves monastery and the monastery of Klov.

If Shepard reminds us of the lingering power of the “superordinate centre,” even as its ability to control the message, and the craftsmen, was diluted, Tassos Papacostas (Chapter 28) warns against regarding all developments as transmissions, from centre to periphery or otherwise. In a compelling rejoinder to those who would see Byzantine, and more particularly Cypriot, models behind domed churches in Aquitaine and Apulia, Papacostas argues for independent, practical, local solutions. He allows us to retain our notion that the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople was the model for Venice’s basilica of San Marco, summarizing recent literature, but challenges us to ask why: “What led the rulers of Venice in either the ninth or the eleventh century to select an antiquated architectural model from Constantinople for their principal church?”

In Chapter 29, Thomas Dale offers no answer to that question. Instead, his imaginative essay on the Basilica di San Marco traces the creation of sacred space, illuminating parallel structures and ceremonies in Constantinople’s Hagia Sophia. Following the transfer of marble transom slabs from Hagia Sophia at the time of the Fourth Crusade, two pulpits were created in St Mark’s: the red porphyry *bigonzo*, an elevated platform for liturgy and dogal ceremonial, and the north pulpit of green Thessalian marble, used for readings. The porphyry slabs surely once comprised the metatorion, a secluded imperial suite within Hagia Sophia where the emperor is known to have changed costume, rested and even taken breakfast with courtiers. Eschewing seclusion for ostension, the *bigonzo*, in contrast, rendered more visible not only the doge, but also relics and the host, facilitating “ocular communion [which] was considered tantamount to assimilating the body of Christ without directly touching or digesting it.” Such a theory depended on a belief in extramission, the notion that objects are rendered visible by projecting rays of light that enter the eye of the beholder. This, in turn, Dale demonstrates, explains the refashioning of the famous Pala d’Oro, the iconography of which is explored further. Marian icons and associated ceremonies, most famously the *Nicopea* and its procession, were also translated from Constantinople to Venice, which, like the incorporation of Archangel Michael on the Pala d’Oro, signified the transmission of divine protection from one God-guarded city to another, and the creation of “a new chosen people, successor to the Greeks.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

WHAT IS A BYZANTINE ICON? CONSTANTINOPLE VERSUS SINAI



Bissera V. Pentcheva

We tend to associate the word “icon” with a portrait of a holy figure on wood panel, painted with tempera or encaustic (wax-based medium).¹ This brief essay will challenge this established notion and argue for the diversity of meanings of *eikon* in Byzantium and for the site-specific character of icons.² In our modern understanding of the history of *eikon* we have sought its origins in the Egyptian painting tradition of panels of the gods or of portraits of the deceased drawn on wood boards or cloth and colored with tempera or encaustic. The evidence for this practice emerges in the Hellenistic period but continues throughout the late Roman imperial times.³ Similarly, we have looked for answers for the origins of icons in the rise of the cult of saints and pilgrimage in Palestine.⁴ Earthen or lead tokens from the Holy Land and Syria with the imprinted portrait of the saint (Figure 21.1), or an image of the architecture or of the hallowed event that took



Figure 21.1 Clay token of St Symeon the Younger, after Vikan 1982: fig. 22.

place at the site, gave the faithful a continual return to the sacred source of power.⁵

Rather than our modes equating with an “image”, “eikon” in Byzantium in the period before Iconoclasm meant enactment, a descent of spirit in matter. The pilgrims’ tokens and the cult of the stylite saints (from *stylos*, column, for they spent long years standing on a column) enabled the establishment of this essentialist understanding of *eikon* as body/matter penetrated by the Holy *Pneuma*:

An *eikon* of God is the human being who has transformed himself according to the image (*eikon*) of God, and especially the one who has received the dwelling (*enoikesin*) of the Holy Spirit. I justly give honor to the icon of the servants of God and *proskynesis* to the house of the Holy Spirit.⁶

With these words the eighth-century Pseudo-Leontios of Neapolis identified as George of Cyprus explained *eikon* as human body receiving the Spirit; the *enoikesis* (dwelling) of the Spirit in matter created the true *eikon*.

How was this *enoikesis* manifested? In a threefold manner: first through the corporeal example of the stylite saints; second through the images and inscriptions on the tokens produced and distributed at these sites; third through the practice of burning incense on top of them. Tokens from the sanctuary of St Symeon the Stylite the Younger (521–92) at the Magic Mountain (today in south-western Turkey) depict the saint standing on his column (Figure 21.1). The inscription running along the rim presents the word “*eulogia*,” blessing.⁷ This token served as a magical amulet, encapsulating the process of embedding spirit in matter, known as *empsychosis* (*en-*, in, *psyche-*, soul, spirit). Its inscription and images are *characteres*, incised and imprinted on the surface. *Character* comes from *charatto*, which means “to cut,” “to engrave,” “to incise;” it is also associated with magic, denoting the process of imbedding spirit in matter.⁸ Their power was activated when incense was burned on top of them.⁹ The wafting smell of this *thymiama* marked the presence of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ It is important to recognise how this ritual practice of burning incense transformed the clay eulogiai into conduits of divine *pneuma*.

EIKON DURING ICONOCLASM: THE FORMATION OF THE CONCEPT OF AN “IMAGE”

Byzantine Iconoclasm (726–843) challenged this understanding of *eikon* as a site of *pneuma* dwelling in matter. So far, we have viewed this crisis through the prism of the sixteenth-century Reformation, imagining the destruction of churches, murals, mosaics and panels. By contrast, the Byzantine phenomenon appears to have been more of a process of narrowing of the meaning of *eikon*: from an identification with a body (an essentialist theory manifested in the stylite cults) to an *eikon* understood as the imprint – *typos* – of visual characteristics on matter (a formalist, non-essentialist theory). At the core of this non-essentialist definition stood the pilgrims’ tokens.

Our modern term “iconoclasm” is a misnomer, stemming from our own narrow identification of icon with a painted panel. The Byzantine conflict, by contrast,

mostly expressed itself as debate on the meaning of the term *eikon*. The “opposition” party was frequently called *eikonomachoi*, “debaters,” not destructors of icons. Neither party denied the validity of *eikones*, yet each defined their identity in different terms. For the *eikonomachoi* of the reigns of Leo III and Constantine V (717–75), a true *eikon* was only the Eucharist: matter penetrated by the Holy Spirit in a sacerdotally administered *empsychosis* of the Holy Spirit.¹¹

By contrast, for the early *eikonophiloï* “icon” was all matter receiving the Spirit, without the need of sacerdotal sanction. For them such *enokesis* became possible though the Incarnation of Christ. Thereby, all matter became sanctified through this descent of *Pneuma*. John of Damascus (born in the late seventh century, died in the 750s) formulated the clearest expression of this position in his Oration I *contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tre*:

Of old, God the incorporeal (*asomatos*) and formless (*aschematistos*) was never depicted (*eikonizeto*), but now God has been seen in the flesh and has associated with human kind, I render in icon (*eikonizo*) the material entity of God seen by humans. I do not venerate (*proskyno*) matter (*hyle*), I venerate the fashioner (*demiourgon*) of matter, who became matter for my sake and accepted to dwell in matter and through matter worked my salvation, and I will not cease from reverencing matter, through which my salvation worked. I do not reverence it as God – far from it . . . Therefore I reverence the rest of matter and hold in respect that through which my salvation came, because it is filled with divine energy and grace.¹²

Already the first sentence juxtaposes the Old Testament God to the New Testament Christ, leading from the formless and incorporeal Godhead, to the materiality of Christ achieved through the Incarnation of the *Logos*. In this core Damascene theory, the Incarnation justified and validated matter: from relics, liturgical objects, to the Eucharist itself. The icon was envisioned as part of that economy of matter. In rejecting the icon, Christians would reject materiality.

It is this essentialist definition that the *eikonomachoi* attacked, linking matter/*hyle* exclusively with the deceit (*plane*) of pagan figural painting/*graphe*. In the course of the early ninth century, they gradually centered the identity of *eikon* on a concrete object; for them it was the cross. The *eikonomachoi* expressed their position on the new façade of the imperial gate, the Chalke, in 814–15. Here five epigrams stated the new non-essentialist, non-figural identity of *eikon*.¹³ The composition consisted of a cross set at the center and five poems: one placed at its foot and four others in the four cardinal points (Figure 21.2). In this cross-wise configuration, the epigrams repeated the shape of the *stauros* and aggressively argued through spatial arrangement and acrostics that *eikon* was equivalent to only two forms: (1) *graphe* understood as “letter” and (2) *typos* defined as the shape of the cross. In fact, both *typos* and *graphe* collapsed in one symbol: the cross composed of letters/acrostic. One epigram of the Chalke is enough to show the forcefulness and clarity of this aniconic theological/political position:



Figure 21.2 A reconstruction of the *eikonomachoi* façade of the Chalke Gate at 815. B. Pentcheva.

The confessors of God write “Christ” in gold (*chrysographousi*) according to the prophets’ voice, not relying on the visible things below. Speaking in equal terms (*isegoron*) is hope and faith in God, as opposed to painting in shadows (*skiographon*) a recurring deceit (*palindromon planen*).

With those, who trample upon it, for it is hated by God, being in agreement, the ones carrying the crowns, raise on high the Cross in a pious judgment.¹⁴

Written by John the Grammarian (patriarch of Constantinople, 834–43), the poem compares *Logos* and *graphe*. Christ as the *Logos* could only be expressed through the text and materially through the cross. Painting, marred by deceit (*plane*) and created through the art of shadows (*skiographia*) and application of color, has failed to convey the divinity. To speak of God requires equal terms (*isegoro*), which is only offered by language, the word and the *logos*. Anything less than the word will compromise the divinity of the prototype. So, in using only the word, the *eikonomachoi* present an example of faith and hope.

The first, middle and last letters of each line of the first epigram are arranged to form the following phrase: *the Passion of Christ is the hope of John*.¹⁵ This phrase

strengthens John's position that the cross is the only legitimate figure, offering the true path to Salvation. Not only the words, but also their visual position in space form the shape of this cross (Figure 21.2). The words "Christ," "Passion" and "John" are all composed of letters placed in vertical columns, intersected by the horizontal line: "Hope." The poem thus "figures" the cross by means of both content and form. Even more so, it depicts the cross entirely through letter configurations/acrostic. The *Logos-graphe* has thus become, or better, has subsumed, the *eikon*, becoming the enfleshment of divinity in matter: an aniconic manifestation of the Incarnation.

The *eikononophiloi* responded to this letter-centered definition of *eikon* with a similar non-essentialist model, collapsing *eikon* with *graphe*, and identifying both with *typos* understood however not just as the cross, but as the imprinted image: an intaglio stamped on matter. Theodore Soudites (759–826), the abbot of the Stoudios monastery, a writer and intellectual, gave the most expressive summary of these ideas in his *Antirrheticus* I–III discourses.¹⁶ Like the iconoclast *typos*, which signified the generic form of the cross and bore formal likeness to the Life-giving Cross, so too did the icon according to the Stoudite definition acquire veneration because it bore the imprint (*typos*) of Christ's likeness (*homoïoma*) and form (*morphe*): a relationship with the prototype established on the basis of form, not essence.¹⁷

Likewise, as much is said about the representation (*typos*) of the cross as about the cross itself. Nowhere does Scripture speak about figure (*typos*) or image (*eikon*), since these have the same meaning, for it is illogical to expect such a mention, inasmuch as for us the effects share in the power of the causes. Is not every image (*eikon*) a kind of a seal (*typos*) bearing in itself the proper appearance of that after which it is named? For we call the representation (*aposphragisma*, "imprint") "cross" because it is also the cross, yet there are no two crosses, and we call the image (*eikon*) of Christ "Christ," yet there are no two Christs (*Antirrheticus* I, sect. 8, trans. Roth, underlined words my addition).¹⁸

Theodore opened the discourse with the equivalence of *typos* and *eikon*. Both the *typos* as cross and the *typos* as *eikon* he defined as imprints and sealings of a prototype. In appropriating *typos* for his iconic theory, Theodore Stoudites extracted the word from its iconoclast, non-anthropomorphic signification. He thus built his theory on the basis of the iconoclast *typos*, yet he adapted it to mean the iconophile *eikon*: a figural representation.

A habitual engagement with mechanical production practices informed Theodore's theoretical model. The making of a seal stood at the core of his argument of equivalence of *typos* and *eikon*. Seals were widely used in the household to protect goods or seal written missives.¹⁹ All one needed was a set of iron pliers and a lead seal blank. The pliers had an intaglio relief incised on the valves. Once the lead blank was softened on the wick of a burning candle, it was placed between the valves. Then the pliers were drawn shut by the hit of a hammer. The negative intaglio impressed itself on the molten surface of the lead (Figure 21.3).

For Theodore, likeness was predicated and transmitted on the basis of mechanical reproduction rather than imitation. The icon was thus a seal (*sphragis*) and *typos*,



Figure 21.3 Iron pliers and a lead seal with the image of St Nikolaos, after Zacos and Veglery 1972: pl. 4.

made by the imprint of *character* on matter. As such *eikon* assimilated the iconoclast *typos*:

For what closer comparison has the icon of Christ than the *typos*/copy of the cross? For through its likeness (*emphereia*) the icon [refers back] to the prototype. By analogy we call “icon” of the life-giving cross the copy (*ektypoma*) [of the cross], so too [we call] the imprint (*ektypoma*) of Christ his “icon.” For *eikon* etymologically means “to look like” (*eoikos*). And to “look like” is likeness (*homoion*), and likeness is perceived, spoken of and seen in the *typos* [copy of the cross] and in the *eikon*.²⁰

Theodore argued that the icon was not just equivalent to the *typos* of the cross, but being an imprint of likeness, it directly led back to the prototype. Even more so, *eikon* allegedly derives from *eoikos*, so both phonetically and semantically the word “icon” manifested likeness. And it is not any type of likeness, but the mechanically reproduced one: the imprinted, sealed resemblance on matter.

This new non-essentialist theory insisting on the definition of *eikon* as the imprint of form on matter emerges in the miniatures of the mid-ninth-century Khludov Psalter (Moscow, State Historical Museum, ms. gr. 129, fol. 4) (Figure 21.4). This image shows a medallion icon of Christ set at the center of a cross.²¹ King David pointing toward it announces: “the light of thy countenance, O Lord, has been imprinted (*esimeiothe*) on us” (Psalm 4:7).²² The Davidic words have become images, which proleptically configure the coming of Christ. The prophecy is realized not just through the image of the Cross; it is superseded by the image of the figural icon. The composition negotiates the meaning of the word “*semeion*”: formerly a synonym for the aniconic (1) *eikonomachos*’ *typos* (cross) and (2) sealing (*sphragis* understood as “blessing gesture”).²³ The figure of the cross is now incorporated in the icon of Christ’s face. This visual composition thus argues how the meaning of *semeion* has become the anthropomorphic *ektyposis* of Christ’s face.

The composition of this miniature unfolds like a series of imprints: the face imprinted on the icon, the cross stamped on the halo and the medallion embedded in the cross. The viewer falls into a *mise-en-abyme* of imprints, all of them subsumed in the radiating fiery light of gold. The configuration evokes the new post-843 iconophile Chalke Gate, where the Chalkites icon of Christ dominated the center of the cross.²⁴ This visual program asserted the supersessionist power of the *eikon* over the cross, celebrating the end of Iconoclasm.

By creating a *typos*-based theory of the image, Theodore in fact shifted the icon discourse away from the Damascene Incarnational economy. The latter focused on the legitimacy of Christ’s *morphe*: the visible form (*character*), and thus answered why representation (*graphe*) was possible. By contrast, Theodore developed the “economy” of the *typos*, and thus explained what made the icon legitimate. The Stoudite *eikon*, by being the product of a double imprint: (1) the *character*, which resembles a “snow angel” made by the imprint of *morphe*, and (2) a *typos* as a sealing of this *character* on matter, displayed the final, correctly presented through double imprinting physical manifestation of Christ’s *morphe*.

The *eikon* as *typos*, understood as a seal and imprint, firmly established plastic arts (relief) over graphic arts (painting). This change had a profound impact on the

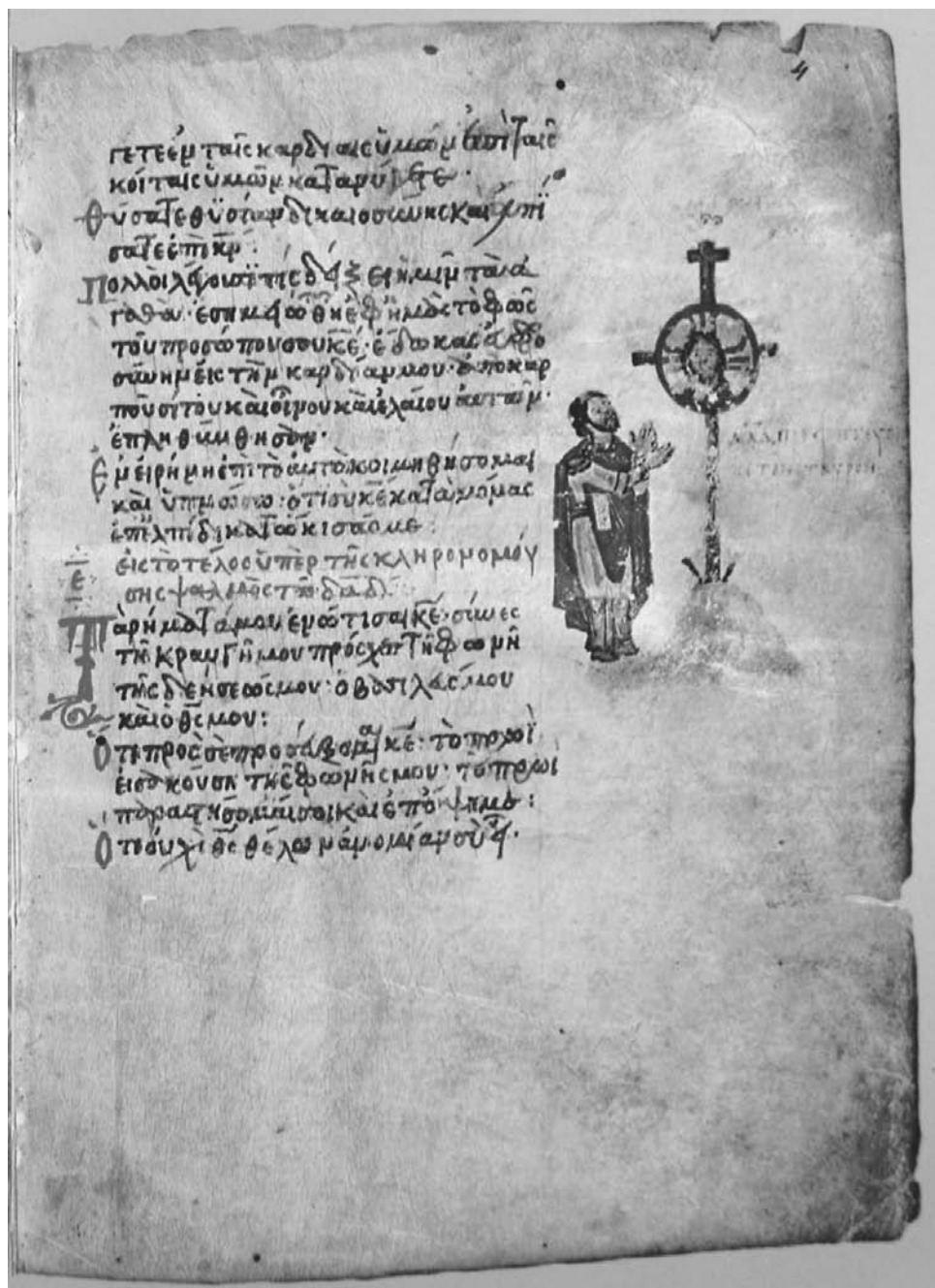


Figure 21.4 Khludov Psalter, Moscow, State Historical Museum, ms. gr. 129, fol. 4, after Shchepkina 1977.

middle Byzantine icon production and appearance. Bas-relief achieved through imprint, engraving, incision, repoussé or enameling took priority over painting. *Graphe* acquired a dominant meaning as *typos* and *sphargis*: an imprinted surface.

ENAMEL, *POIKILIA* AND MOVING EYES

Enamel best exemplifies this *typos*-centered theoretical model of *eikon*. It is a form of imprint made by fire, for its figures are formed of metal paste set in molds (the golden cloisons or the sunken bed of gold) and transformed by fire into a luminous gemlike surface. In the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries, Byzantium became a leader in the production of this medium, creating objects whose splendor of gold, translucency of glass and complexity of workmanship dazzled foreign courts.

These were luxury mixed-media relief icons – *poikilai eikones* – displaying an array of artistic techniques (enamel, repoussé, filigree) and shifting chameleonic surfaces. The enamel, especially the green one, possessed an iridescence that became manifest in movement, sunlight and under the flicker of candlelight. Through its opalescent appearances, the metal mixed-media icon conveyed a sense of living, breathing matter: the quintessential *empsychos graphe* (en-, in, *psyche*, spirit) in Byzantium.²⁵ It acted like fish-scales in ruffled waters playing out a rainbow of colors, or like the incessant, always-changing flame of fire, or the polychromacity of Byzantine *porphyreos*, whose multiplicity and instability of hues displayed the vortex of stormy seas or gushing blood.²⁶

The Byzantines designated this polymorphy as *poikilos* or *poikilia* (diversity): phenomenal effects sensually experienced.²⁷ *Poikilia* was understood as animation: the spirit present in matter. It is this power of *poikilia* – the spectacle of changing appearances, polychromacity and opalescence corporeally experienced – that the mixed-media relief icon gathered into one gemlike structure of gold, pearls and translucent glass.

The rise of such luxury relief icons in Constantinople in the tenth and eleventh centuries expressed an aesthetic pursuit for the phenomenal, opposed to pictorial naturalism and painting. The moving diurnal and candlelight across these rich material surfaces create highlights and shadows, giving rise to myriad appearances. The Constantinopolitan mixed-media *eikon-typos* has a meaning in flux, consolidating and unraveling in the phenomenal world of breathing space, flickering and moving light, and drafts of air. It is the human voice and movement that bring about animation in the icon. With each gesture, or word, or simple breath, the faithful causes the flame of candles to flicker, bringing about the shimmering splendor of the gold and the dance of shadows across the complex surfaces of the image. It is this dynamic *poikilia* that endows the object with life, transforming it into an *empsychos graphe*, both literally and physically in-spirited.²⁸

The face of the bas-relief icon Archangel Michael kept at the treasury of San Marco, Venice performs this *poikilia* of shifting appearances (Figure 21.5).²⁹ If a candle is brought and moved left and right, up and down in front of the image, the head changes expression. His eyes, formed in repoussé gold, capture the flicker of light in bright, shining accents. His burning gaze rotates as the candlelight moves, creating the sense of living eyes, searching and following the viewer.³⁰ Life – *psyche* and *pneuma* – emanates from this animated gaze.

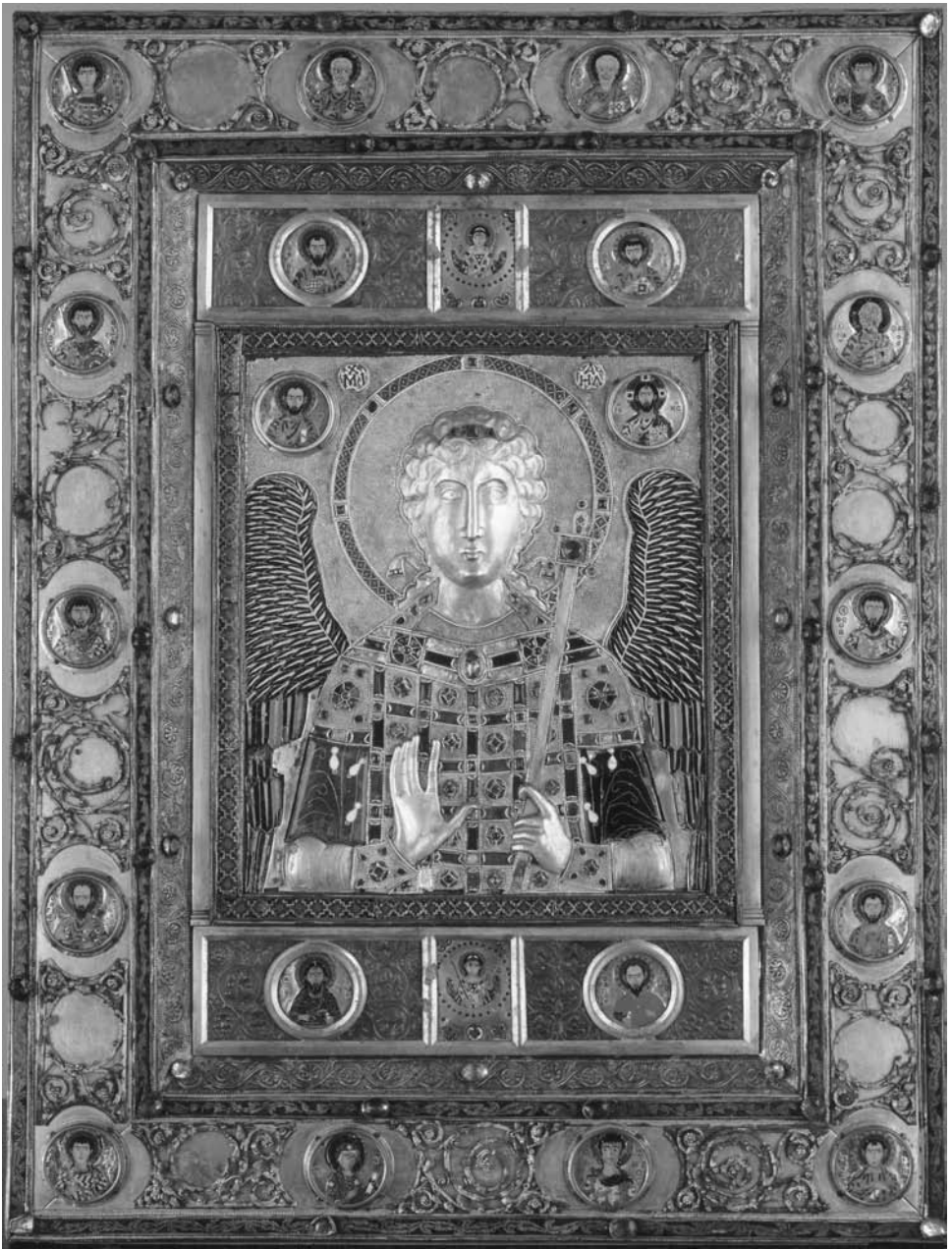


Figure 21.5 Mixed-media relief icon of the Archangel Michael, Venice, Treasury of San Marco. Art Resource, New York; photo: Cameraphoto.

Moreover, the repoussé bas-relief face presents a fiery vision and enacts what seeing meant for a Byzantine audience.³¹ According to the prevalent *extramission* model, the eye sends fiery rays which touch the surface of objects and return back carrying the memory of this tactile experience.³² Yet, not only the eyes of the

beholder “touch/kiss” the rich surfaces of these icons, but the radiant enamel or repoussé *eikones* act like this very eye – casting nets, pulling in the spectator in the luminous play of their shimmering and reflective surfaces.

I call this quality of the mixed-media *poikile eikon* “performative,” because while being *apsychos graphe* (a- without, *psyche*, spirit), it gives a performance of *empsychosis*, engages the phenomenal through its surfaces and acquires life by proxy, by reflection and by *skiagraphia* (the play of spatial shadows). It is the potential for change lurking in the object. The performative icon is thus firmly tied to its space, engaged in a *symbiosis*, interaction, or to use the Byzantine Eucharistic terms, it participates (*metecho* and *metalambano*) in its environment.³³

THE RETURN TO GRAPHE AS PAINTING

Inanimate (*apsychos graphe*) matter, lacking presence, should only be given honorable/relative veneration (*timetikos/schetikos proskynesis*). In prioritizing exteriority and phenomenal *poikilia*, the middle Byzantine luxury mixed-media *eikones typoi* precipitated a crisis of misapplied *latreutikos proskynesis* (adoration) leading to a new iconoclast outbreak 1081–95. This Komnenian Iconoclasm faced the problem of confusing presence effects for divine presence. Yet, the true cause for the ensuing iconoclast crisis lay elsewhere, in the imperial appropriation and melting of church treasures.³⁴

An opposition headed by Leo, the bishop of Chalcedon, arose against this policy. By pairing iconic matter (*eikonike hyle*) with the *character* in the definition of *eikon*, Leo ensured the inalienability of the material substance and thus the inviolateness of the icon itself as an object.³⁵

Icon is said in the case of Christ, the Virgin, the venerable angels, and all saints and holy men to be both, i.e., the matter (*hyle*) and the *character* imparted in them. The *hypostaseis* imparted in the icons of all the others [Virgin, angels and saints] are to be venerated relatively and honorably, and be kissed.³⁶

And again:

For always the iconic matter (*eikonike hyle*) is matter dedicated (*anatetheimene*) to God, as a divine dedication [votive gift] (*anathema*), and the *character* of Christ is always Christ and God; who is contemplated through the mind yet being circumscribed (*kechorismenos*) in matter.³⁷

According to Leo, matter, *eikonike hyle*, is what makes the *character*/form visible; it is inalienable, a material necessity for the existence of *eikon*. As a votive gift, an *anathema*, it is also protected from attempts at expropriation.³⁸

Leo’s insistence on *eikonike hyle* as part of the definition of *eikon* was immediately challenged by the imperial party. The *semeioma* of 1095 proclaimed that icon was just “likeness” (*homoïoma*):

And again the emperor asked: “What do you call icons: the iconic material substances (*eikonikas hylas*) or the likenesses (*homoïomata*) made visible

(*phainomena*) in them?” And every one responded: “The likenesses (*homoiomata*) made visible in the material substances (*hylais*).” Should the likeness (*homoioima*) of Christ, which is made visible in matter receive adorational (*latreutikos*) proskynesis?” And they said “No!” And the emperor said: “This is the truth what you have just said.” Then the bishop of Claudiopolis said: “Some say that the icons do not partake in divine grace.” The emperor together with everyone else responded: “Anathema to the one who says that, for the icons partake in divine grace, yet they are not of the same substance (*homophyeis*) as their prototypes.” . . . The emperor asked: “The likeness of Christ represented (*graphomenon*) in matter, is this his divine nature (*theia physis*)?” Every one responded: “No, for divine nature (*theia physis*) is beyond representation (*aperigrapτος*).”³⁹

The imperial definition narrowly limited the icon to just the likeness (*homoioima*), excluding the material in which it was fashioned. By excising the *eikonike hyle* from what makes an icon, this statement denied the role of matter. By shifting the discourse from imprint (*typos*) to likeness (*homoioima*), the new definition made the icon primarily concerned with the reproduction of similarity, not with a spectacle of phenomenal *poikilia*. In clinching icon to likeness, the Komnenian formulation eventually cleared the path to pictorial naturalism.

Connecting icon production to the medium of painting, the Komnenian definition established the inalienability of likeness. Painting on wood panels cannot be recycled like the metal relief icons, hence painting has an advantage over the mixed-media *typoi*. At the same time, the metal revetments, made of gold and silver, could easily be taken down from a painted icon. As simple *anathemata*, human gifts, these metal sheaths no longer carried the likeness of the holy figure. In separating likeness from the precious metals and gems, the Komnenian interpretation of *eikon* slowly ensured the move away from *graphe* as *typos* to *graphe* as painting. This stimulated the production of painted icons with metal revetments, which in turn secured the continued state access to these metal deposits, while preserving the inviolateness of the image.⁴⁰ The metal-revetted painted icons rose in fulfilment of this neat Komnenian separation of *eikon* from its material *anathemata*. The Palaiologan production preserves many such examples of neatly paired *homoioima* with *anathema*, such as the late thirteenth-century icon of the Mother of God Psychosostria (Savior-of-Souls) from Ohrid, Macedonia (Figure 21.6).

SINAI AND THE DOMINANCE OF THE PAINTED PANEL

In contrast to Constantinople, Sinai, which lay outside the Byzantine borders after the mid-seventh century, never experienced the rise of luxury metal relief icons. Instead it manifests a continual and stable understanding of *eikon* as painting. Sinai purposefully created a very place- and medium-specific definition of icon, as a site of optical experience theophany and receptor of divine orders.

Rocks of pink granite, sand, dry winds and dazzling light shape the arid landscape of Sinai. Here, paradoxically, visions of God were projected onto the barren land. At Sinai Moses saw the burning bush and received the command to lead the Israelites

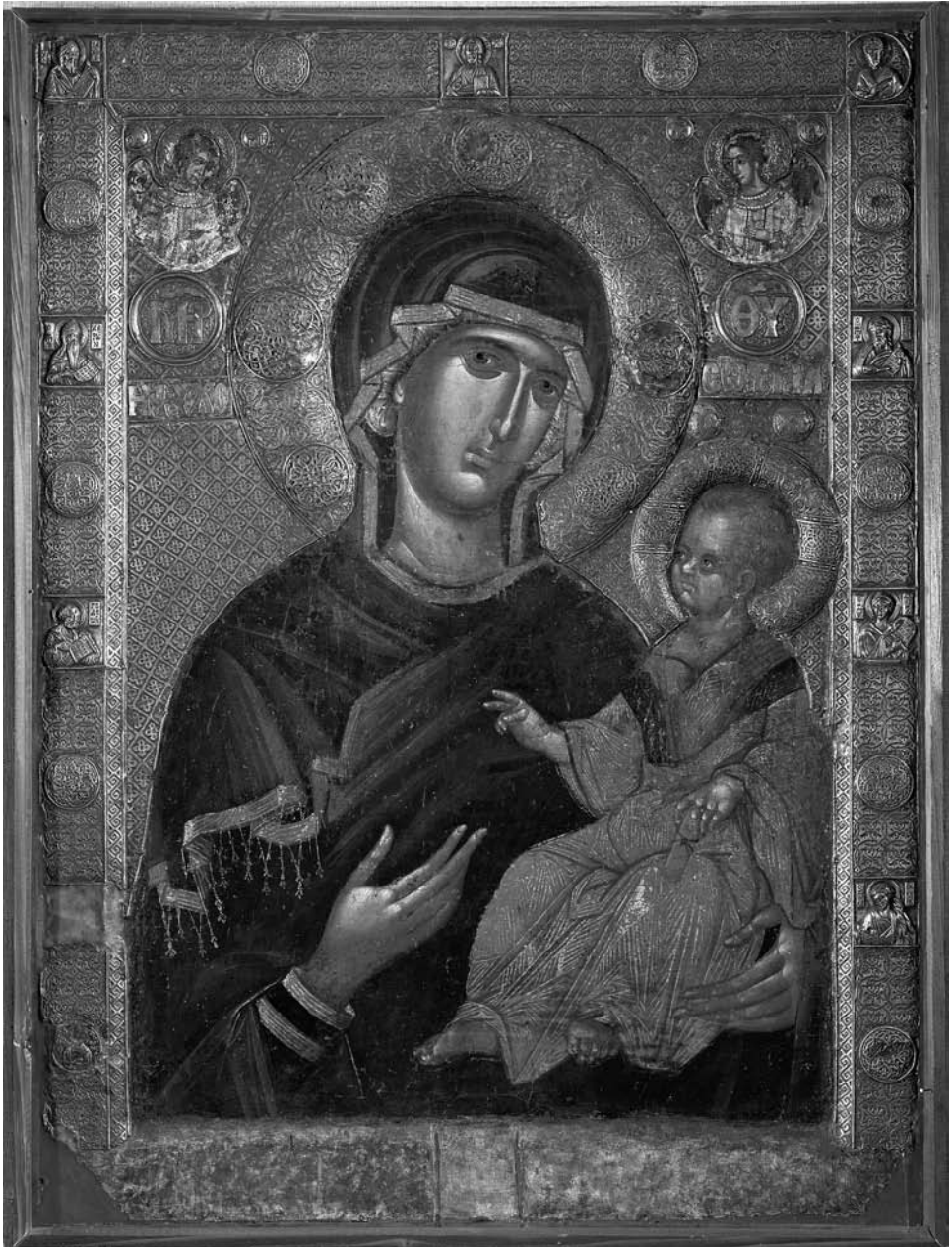


Figure 21.6 Painted icon with silver-gilt-enamel revetment of the Mother of God Psychosostria, Ohrid, Icon Gallery. Art Resource, New York; photo: Erich Lessing.

out of Egypt (Exodus 3:1–10). Here again he climbed Mt Sinai to receive the tablets of the law (Exodus 24), and when he came down the mountain he condemned the Israelites for their idolatrous worship of the golden calf. Sinai thus became the site of reformed sight and obedience, as defined by the First Commandment:

You shall not make for yourselves any graven image (*eidolon*), or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water underneath the earth. You shall not bow yourself down to them or serve them.

(Exodus 20:4–5, Deuteronomy 5:8–9)⁴¹

The Greek defines the forbidden object as idol (*eidolon*). The word in patristic Greek refers to images of the pagan gods, destroyed by Christ. As a secondary meaning, it refers to phantom of the mind and ghost. The Latin uses “carving” (*sculptilis*). It thus emphasizes surface and relief. The same word *sculptilis* appears again in Psalm 105 (106):19, which again refers to the idolatrous actions of the Jews at Mt Sinai.⁴² The Latin *sculptilis* has a Greek equivalent – *glyptos*. In both the Latin West and the Byzantine East *sculptilis/glyptos* evoked sculpture: statues or bas-reliefs, images carved by human hand. It is this *sculptilis/glyptos* that was banned on Sinai.

This emphasis on seeing as an optical, non-tactile experience is strangely mirrored in the actual collection of icons at the monastery. Most panels rely on optical effects of *chrysography* (highlights marked by the application of gold lines). The collection also does not hold metal relief icons, or ivory and enamel. In addition, no metal revetments for icons are preserved. Last but not least, no miraculous icons feature among the over 2,000 panels. The objects gathered all conform to the definition of *eikon* as a wooden board with tempera or encaustic images. By rejecting the metal relief icon, and with it tactility of the middle Byzantine Constantinopolitan *poikilos typos*, Sinai brought out the painted image. The entire collection addresses itself as a site of optical experience, shunning *glyptos* and asserting *graphe* as painted *eikon*.

This programmatic emphasis on sight, vision and radiance is embedded in the subject matter of the panels, especially the ones produced on Sinai, showing how site-specific the history of the icon was in the Middle Ages. One panel bears out this optical iconic identity: the thirteenth-century icon of John the Baptist (Figure 21.7).⁴³ At first glance, the icon appears quite strange, for none of the figures faces the viewer. John the Baptist is turned to the side, engaged in a dialogue with Christ. The eyes of the Forerunner, however, connect to a different realm: the small centrally placed roundel presenting the scene of the Baptism of Christ. This becomes the signature moment in John’s identity: his prescient sight, recognizing Christ’s divinely human nature and his sacrifice for the sake of humanity. The Baptism roundel is linked on a vertical axis to the purple scroll unfolded in John’s hand: “Look! The lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).⁴⁴

The purple parchment refers to flesh, incarnation and sacrifice; it carries the color of blood. And this sacrificial message is confirmed and strengthened by the word “lamb of God.” The purple scroll also establishes a connection with the severed head of the Forerunner hovering on the surface of the font’s water, represented to the right. Blood and water are intermixed in a vision of sacrifice, which evoke both the decapitation of John the Baptist and the Crucifixion of Christ.

Right above John’s severed head with eyes closed in death stand the last words of a long inscription: “. . . your holy icon we venerate.” Which holy icon is referred to here? Is it the entire panel, but this problematic for the icon lacks stasis: an arresting gaze. Could it be the severed head? Yet it fails to establish eye contact because its eyes are closed. Or is it Christ and his Baptism, the true icon: the very moment which sets



Figure 21.7 Painted icon of St John the Baptist, Mt Sinai, monastery of St Catherine. Reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mt Sinai.

in motion the journey of Christ leading to his Crucifixion, Death and Anastasis? The Baptism is indeed the scene of transformation grasped through the power of one man's divinely inspired sight. John's seer's eyes foresaw the coming of the Messiah. The holy icon (*septe ikona*) is the very vision he saw: the miniature central roundel of the Baptism of Christ.

Emphasis here is placed on seeing, understood as a trajectory leading from the closed eyes of John's severed head, across the open scroll and his speaking hand, finally to the Forerunner's upturned face gazing at the vision of salvation: Christ's Baptism. Given its strong rhetorical stance for divinely inspired sight, this icon fits perfectly into the programmatic defense of theophany as the milestone of Sinaitic religious identity.

The special status of this Baptismal scene is also reinforced by its position; it is set inside the arch in a hallowed, golden ground, and thus separated by the other two medallions, which are placed outside the architectural frame. The iconic scene of the Baptism is connected to the command: "Behold, Look!" (*Ide*).

Sight is shown as judgment, while hearing is presented as a means to convey and obey divine commands. These ideas emerge in the two long inscriptions. The one on the right starts with the question "Do you see?" and links to the command *Ide* (behold) written on the purple scroll. The long text continues:

Do you see what they do, O divine Logos, the ones who do not bear the reproach of darkness? For behold those who cover with dirt my head, which they cut off with the sword. But as the ones who restored it from the awful place back to light by means only you know of, for them I beseech you, preserve them in life, for they venerate my holy icon.⁴⁵

This prayer carries the visceral, abrasive power of John the Baptist; there is no middle ground, the world is divided into those who transgress without repentance, unable to carry the reproach of darkness and those who follow the right path. Death is meted out to the sinful, salvation to the righteous. The icon becomes the site of judgment, for the Forerunner asks Christ to see and thus condemn and punish the evildoers. The axe and the severed head only intensify the sheer anger and fury of John's speech.

The word "reproach" (*elegmos*) is laden with meaning, for it refers both to the trial by water (*elegmos tou hydatou*: Numbers 2:18–31) and to John the Baptist's washing of the sins of the repentant. The Virgin herself was subjected to this trial by water when Joseph questioned her purity after her encounter with the Archangel Gabriel.

Elegmos/reproach connects the right side of the panel to the left. The left side of the icon forms a visual and textual model for bearing the good fruits of repentance. At the top Zacharias receives the news of the conception of his son, below Mary offers a purple cloth to the Baptist, followed by a quotation from the Gospel (Matthew 3:10) and an image of a tree and an axe. The inscription emphasizes that only the trees bearing good fruit will be spared the axe and fire of destruction:

And even now the axe is laying at the root of the trees – therefore every tree that is not bearing good fruit is to be cut down and thrown into the fire.

(Matthew 3:10)⁴⁶

Bearing the good fruit is understood as the act of repentance (Matthew 3:8). John the Baptist had ushered the path of repentance through water, inviting humanity to partake in it. Through him “trees” have started to bear good fruit. It is these good offspring who discovered the severed head of the Forerunner. On their behalf, John the Baptist now beseeches Christ to see and to offer them eternal life. “To see” and “to save” become equivalent. The immediate lack of a direct eye contact with any of the depicted figures on this icon thus acquires a deeper meaning, for it suggests the reversal of viewing strategies. Rather than the beholder looking at the panel, it is the panel itself that bears the stamp of the all-seeing divine eye, awoken by the Forerunner’s request to see and mete out judgment: the eye of God at Sinai. *Graphe* is here understood first and foremost as scripture, only secondly is it translated in figural form. The miniature visualization “reads” like a manuscript illumination, illustrating a text: the word dominates the image.

CONCLUSION

Sinai’s unique collection of painting on wood panels, starting in the sixth century, offers an unprecedented opportunity to study the history of the medieval pictorial tradition. At the same time, it has seduced scholars to equate the Sinai painted panel with the normative Byzantine icon. This has led to our modern identification of *eikon* with wood panel in tempera or encaustic.

By contrast, Constantinople had a different history of the icon, privileging the mixed-media relief object, the *poikile eikon*, in the period from the end of Iconoclasm to the late eleventh century. In separating the icon from *zographia* and in linking it with imprint (*typos*), the Byzantines raised the relief icon to the highest status. Theirs was a different hierarchy in which the plastic image in metal, enamel, stone and ivory presented the perfect iconic form, performing presence through chameleonic appearances of spatial shadows, radiance and opalescence across complex surfaces.

NOTES

- 1 Belting 1994.
- 2 Pentcheva 2006b; Pentcheva 2010.
- 3 Bierbrier 1997; Walker 1997, 2000; Doxiadis 1995. On the *eikones* of pagan gods, Mathews 2001.
- 4 Vikan 2003.
- 5 Vikan 1982.
- 6 Εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονὼς ἄνθρωπος καὶ μάλιστα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου ἐνοίκησιν δεξάμενος. Δικαίως οὖν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ δούλων τιμῶ καὶ προσκυνῶ καὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, PG 93: 164C, D. Pseudo-Leontios of Neapolis identified as George of Cyprus, eighth century.
- 7 Grabar 1958; Elsner 1997.
- 8 On *charatto* and magic, Pentcheva 2010: ch. 1.
- 9 *Vita St Symenis Stylitae*, ch. 231, vv. 72–3, ed. Van den Ven 1962; Pentcheva 2010: ch. 1.
- 10 Harvey 2006.
- 11 Pentcheva 2010: ch. 3.
- 12 Πάλαι μὲν ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεὸς ὁ σώματος τε καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος οὐδαμῶς εἰκονίζετο, νῦν δὲ σαρκὶ ὀφθέντος θεοῦ καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις συναναστραφέντος εἰκονίζω θεοῦ τὸ ὁρώμενον. Οὐ προσκυνῶ τῇ ὕλῃ, προσκυνῶ δὲ τὸν τῆς ὕλης δημιουργόν, τὸν ὕλην δι’ ἐμὲ γενόμενον καὶ ἐν ὕλῃ κατοικῆσαι καταδεξάμενον καὶ δι’ ὕλης τὴν σωτηρίαν μου ἐργασάμενον, καὶ σέβων οὐ παύσομαι τὴν ὕλην, δι’

ἥς ἡ σωτηρία μου εἴργασται. Σέβω δὲ οὐχ ὡς θεόν – ἄπαγε· [. . .] Τὴν δὲ γε λοιπὴν ὕλην σέβω καὶ δι' αἰδοῦς ἄγω, δι' ἥς ἡ σωτηρία μου γέγονεν, ὡς θεΐας ἐνεργείας καὶ χάριτος ἐμπλεων. John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tre*, I, sect. 16, ed. Kottler 1969–88; English trans. Louth 2003: 29.

13 PG 99: 435–78.

14 Χρυσογραφοῦσι Χριστὸν οἱ θεηγόροΙ
 ῥῆσει προφητῶν, μὴ βλέποντες τοῖς κάτΩ.
 Ἰσηγώρων γάρ ΕΛΠΙΣ ἡ θεοπιστία
 Σκιογράφων δὲ τὴν πάλινδρομον πλάνην
 Τρανῶς πατοῦσιν ὡς Θεῷ μισουμένην
 Οἷς συμπνέοντες οἱ φοροῦντες τὰ στέφΗ,
 Ὑψοῦσι φαιδρῶς Σταυρὸν εὐσεβεῖ κρίσει.

PG 99: 436B.

15 Χριστοῦ τὸ πάθος ἐλπὶς Ἰωάννη, PG 99: 436 B.

16 PG 99: 327–436. English trans. Roth 1981.

17 Theodore Stoudites, *Antirrheticus* III, ch. 3, sect. 5: PG 99: 421D.

18 Ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐπὶ τύπου σταυροῦ, ὅσαπερ ἂν περὶ αὐτοῦ σταυροῦ πέφανται. Οὐδαμοῦ δὲ περὶ τύπου καὶ εἰκόνης, εἰ καὶ ταῦτ' ἄμφότερα τῇ σημασίᾳ· ἀσυλλόγιστον γὰρ τὸ ζητεῖν ὡς συνόντων ἅμα δυνάμει ἐν τοῖς καθ' ἡμᾶς τῶν αἰτιατῶν τοῖς αἰτίοις. Ἡ οὐχὶ πᾶσα εἰκὼν σφραφὶς τίς ἐστι καὶ ἐκτύπωσις ἐν ἑαυτῇ φέρουσα τὸ κύριον εἶδος τοῦθ' ὅπερ καὶ λέγεται; Σταυρὸν τε γὰρ λέγομεν τὸ ἀποσφράγισμα, ὅτι καὶ σταυρός· καὶ οὐ δύο σταυροί· καὶ Χριστὸν τὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰκόνα, ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς καὶ οὐ δύο Χριστοί, Theodore Stoudites, *Antirrheticus* I, sect. 8: PG 99: 337C.

19 Vikan and Nesbitt 1980.

20 Τί γὰρ ἐγγύτερον Χριστοῦ εἰκὼν εἰς παράδειγμα, ἢ τύπος σταυροῦ, ὅποτε τῆς αὐτῆς ἐμφερείας ἡ εἰκὼν πρὸς τὸ ἐκτύπωμα; Καὶ γὰρ τοῦ ζωοποιοῦ σταυροῦ εἰκόνα λέγομεν κατὰχρησιν, τὸ αὐτοῦ ἐκτύπωμα· καὶ Χριστοῦ ἐκτύπωμα τὴν αὐτοῦ εἰκόνα· ἡ γὰρ εἰκὼν κατ' ἐτυμολογίαν, τὸ εἰκότως δηλοῖ· τὸ δὲ εἰκότως τὸ ὅμοιον· τὸ δ, ὅμοιον καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς εἰκόνης, καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ τύπου καὶ νενόηται καὶ λέλεκται καὶ θεάεται, Theodore Stoudites, *Antirrheticus* II, ch. 23: PG 99: 368B, C. Another English trans. Roth 1981: 57.

21 Corrigan 1992 and Shchepkina 1977.

22 ἐσημειώθη ἐφ' ἡμᾶς τὸ φῶς τοῦ προσώπου σου Κύριε, Psalm 4:7.

23 On *semeion* and *sphragis*, Reijnders 1965: 118–87.

24 Frolow 1963.

25 Pentcheva 2010: ch. 4.

26 Pentcheva 2006b: 643–8.

27 Pentcheva 2006b; Pentcheva 2009.

28 Pentcheva 2010: chs 5–6.

29 Pentcheva, 2006b; Pentcheva 2009, with all the photographic documentation of the icon's performance.

30 Pentcheva 2010b: ch. 5.

31 Pentcheva 2006b; Pentcheva 2010.

32 Frank 2000b: 98–115; Nelson 2000a; Barber 2007: 94–9.

33 Pentcheva 2006b; Pentcheva 2010.

34 Pentcheva 2009: ch. 7. See also Stephenson in this volume ch. 2.

35 On Leo's letter to Nikolaos, bishop of Adrianopolis, 1093/4, see Carr 1995: 580–2, Barber 2007: 131–43, with references.

36 Εἰκὼν λέγεται ἐπὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῆς Θεοτόκου καὶ τῶν τιμίων ἀγγέλων καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τῶν ὁσίων ἀνδρῶν καὶ τὸ συναμφοτέρων· ἦτοι ἡ ὕλη τε καὶ ὁ ταύτῃ ἐγγραφεὶς χαρακτήρ· καὶ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων πάντων αἱ ὑποστάσεις ταῖς εἰκόσιν ἐγγραφόμεναι, τιμητικῶς καὶ σχετικῶς προσκυνοῦνται καὶ ἀσπάζονται, Leo's letter to Nikolaos, bishop of Adrianopolis, 1093/4, Lavriotes 1900: 415, 446.

37 Ἀεὶ γὰρ ἡ εἰκονικὴ ὕλη ἐστὶν ἀνατεθειμένη τῷ Θεῷ, ὡς θεῖον ἀνάθημα καὶ ὁ χαρακτήρ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, αἰεὶ Χριστὸς ἐστὶ καὶ Θεός· κεχωρισμένως τῆς ὕλης νοούμενος, Leo's letter to Nikolaos, bishop of Adrianopolis, 1093/4, Lavriotes 1900: 414, 446.

- 38 Ταῖς μὲν γὰρ ἄλλαις εἰκόσι τιμητική τε καὶ σχετική προσκύνησις ἀπονέμεται, καὶ ἀσπασμὸς ὥσπερ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς ἀναθήμασι διὰ τὸν κοινὸν Δεσπότην, Leo's letter to Nikolaos, bishop of Adrianopolis, 1093/4, Lavriotes 1900: 415.
- 39 Πάλιν ἠρώτησεν ὁ βασιλεὺς, «Εἰκόνας ποίας λέγετε; τὰς εἰκονικὰς ὕλας ἢ τὰ ἐν ταύταις φαινόμενα ὁμοιώματα;» Καὶ εἶπον ἅπαντες, «Τὰ ὁμοιώματα ἐν ταῖς ὕλαις φαινόμενα.» Καὶ αὐθις ἠρώτησε, «Δύναται τὸ ὁμοίωμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὸ ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ ὁρώμενον λατρευτικῶς προσκυνεῖσθαι;» καὶ εἶπον, «Οὐχί.» Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ βασιλεὺς, «Οὕτως ἔχει ἡ ἀλήθεια, ὡς εἶπατε.» Εἶπε δὲ ὁ Κλαυδίουπόλεως, ὅτι «Τινὲς οὐ μετέχειν λέγουσι θείας χάριτος τὰς ἁγίας εἰκόνας.» Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ βασιλεὺς μετὰ πάντων, «Ἀνάθεμα τῷ οὕτω λέγοντι· θείας μὲν γὰρ χάριτος μετέχουσιν αἱ ἅγιοι εἰκόνες, ὁμοφυεῖς δὲ τοῖς πρωτοτύποις οὐκ εἰσι. » . . . Αὐθις ἠρώτησε, «Τὸ ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ γραφόμενον ὁμοίωμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦτο ἐστὶν ἡ θεία φύσις;» Καὶ εἶπον ἅπαντες, «Οὐχί· ἡ γὰρ θεία φύσις ἀπερίγραπτος.» From the *Semeioma* of Alexios I Komnenos, council of Blachernai 1094/5: PG 127: 971–84, esp. 981A.
- 40 Pentcheva 2009.
- 41 οὐ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ εἰδωλον οὐδὲ παντὸς ὁμοίωμα, ὅσα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄνω καὶ ὅσα ἐν τῇ γῇ κάτω καὶ ὅσα ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι· ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς. οὐ προσκυνήσεις αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ μὴ λατρεύσης αὐτοῖς.
- 42 Καὶ ἐποίησαν μόσχον ἐν Χωρήβ, καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ γλυπτῷ (Ps. 105:19).
Et fecerunt vitulum in Choreb et adoraverunt sculptile (Ps. 105:19).
Glyptos and *sculptilis* appear again in the same context, Ps. 105 (106):36.
- 43 Nelson and Collins 2006: 147, no. 10; Carr 2007 with emphasis on the Eucharistic symbolism.
- 44 Ἴδε ὁ ἄμνος τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, John 1:29.
- 45 ὁρᾷς ὅσα πράττουσιν ὁ Θεοῦ λόγε· οἱ τοὺς ἐλεγμοὺς μὴ φέροντες· τοῦ σκότου· ἰδοὺ γὰρ οὗτοι τὴν ἐμὴν/ ταύτην κάραν· κρύπτουσιν εἰς γῆν τῷ ζίφει/ τετμηκότες· ἀλλ' ὥσπερ αὐτὴν ἐξ ἀφα/νοῦς τοῦ τόπου· εἰς φῶς ἐπανήγαγες· οἷς οἶδας τρόποις· οὕτως δυσω/πῶ σῶσον αὐτοὺς ἐν βίῳ· τοὺς τὴν ἐμὴν σέβοντας/ σεπτὴν εἰκόνα.
- 46 Ἦδη δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀξί/ν πρὸς τὴν ρίζαν τοῦ δέν/δρου κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιὸν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκ/κόπτεται καὶ/ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

DEFINING LITURGICAL SPACE



Vasileios Marinis

INTRODUCTION

The idea that ritual influenced Byzantine religious architecture is not new nor particularly radical. After all, a Byzantine church was constructed primarily to house a wide array of rites, from the important sacraments of the Eucharist and Baptism to an ever-increasing number of services of secondary importance, such as Compline, Vespers and the rest of the Hours. Nevertheless, historians, with a handful of exceptions, have systematically ignored the function of Byzantine churches as architectural frameworks for the performance of rituals, focusing instead on issues of typology, morphology and building styles. The reasons for this discrepancy are varied: whereas our knowledge of Byzantine architecture has advanced significantly in the past decades, the study of the history and evolution of the Byzantine rite is still incomplete and the evidence remains fragmentary, especially for areas outside Constantinople; liturgical texts are inaccessible to the untrained, and liturgical treatises are notoriously esoteric; and most importantly, both categories of sources show a vexing yet thought-provoking indifference toward the space in which the rituals that they describe took place.

In the following I argue that knowledge of ritual is essential in any interpretation of Byzantine religious architecture. In doing so, however, I propose that the traditional question – “did ritual influence architecture or vice versa?” – be replaced by an examination of their mutual interaction, a methodology that allows for more subtlety in the resulting interpretation. An orderly narrative that neatly matches ritual activities with elements of planning is simply unsustainable. The malleability of the Byzantine rite (itself an elusive notion), whose services could be performed with relatively the same ease, although without the same splendor, in both Hagia Sophia and in a small private chapel defies such a simplistic approach. Equally important is the acknowledgment that Byzantine churches were not built *exclusively* for the accommodation of the Divine Liturgy and the other services. Building technology, availability of materials, funding, ideological concerns of the patrons and theological symbolism are just a few factors influencing the final outcome. The variety of church types in the middle and late Byzantine periods offers an undeniable proof of this assertion.

Whereas the general concept of a church plan was standardized during the middle Byzantine period, corresponding to the standardization of the form of the ritual, the particulars of both were not. Another misapprehension of Byzantine architectural interpretation that needs to be rectified is that of singularity of use, especially in the evaluation of subsidiary and annexed spaces such as the narthex, ambulatories and chapels. These spaces had, or eventually acquired, a multitude of functions, whether this was the original intention of the planners or not.

The focus of this chapter is primarily the architecture and the ritual of Constantinople, from the ninth to fifteenth centuries.¹ This is by necessity, as the textual evidence pertaining to the liturgical matters of the capital is abundant, whereas for the provinces the information is limited or non-existent. Moreover, Constantinople played a dominant role in developments both artistic and liturgical. Whenever possible, I make a conscious effort to refer both to earlier developments and to architectural traditions outside the capital, in order to better contextualize the interaction of architecture and ritual in Byzantium. Due to restriction of space, the discussion of architectural developments concentrates almost exclusively on liturgical planning, leaving aside issues of construction techniques, style and other aspects of architecture common in surveys.

THE RITUAL

The Byzantine rite consists of a series of services comprising the sacraments (such as Eucharist, Baptism), the Liturgical Hours (Matins, the “Little Hours,” Vespers, Apodeipnon, etc.), occasional vigils and lesser services, along with the cycles of both movable and fixed feasts and saints’ days celebrated throughout the liturgical year. The rite and its constituent parts evolved (and indeed continue to evolve in some degree) constantly.² One of the most significant changes in the years after Iconoclasm was the increased influence of the monastic rite on the cathedral rite of the Great Church, the so-called Stoudite synthesis, named after the monastery of Stoudios in which this reform began.³ The “monasticizing” of the Byzantine rite, which was completed by the late twelfth century, was of great consequence to the architecture of the middle and late Byzantine periods, as we shall see.

The most important of the rituals that constituted the Byzantine rite was the Eucharist, usually called the Divine Liturgy (Θεία Λειτουργία). Before Iconoclasm, the liturgy in major centers like Constantinople and Rome was distinguished by its processional character.⁴ Processions of the worshippers, headed by the bishop and the clergy and with the occasional participation of an imperial party, preceded the main liturgical celebration of the city, which took place at a designated church or shrine (called *σύναξις* in Greek). These stational services strongly influenced the form of the liturgy and several of the other services, especially in Constantinople. Apart from the processions leading to it, the Divine Liturgy itself in the years before Iconoclasm was marked by a series of solemn processions, known as “entrances.” The first part of the service, the Liturgy of the Word, started with the so-called First Entrance. People who did not participate in the pre-liturgical procession awaited the high clerics and officials of the empire outside the church in its atrium, an unroofed courtyard directly outside the church to the west, usually enclosed on three or four sides by porticoes. As soon as the procession arrived, clergy

and laity solemnly entered the church building. The celebrant bishop took his place in the throne in the center of the *synthronon*, with the rest of the clergy surrounding him, and the congregation found their way into the nave. The Liturgy of the Word included readings from the Old Testament, the Acts or the Epistles, and, most importantly, from the Gospels. These were followed by the sermon and the dismissal of the catechumens that concluded the first part of the service. The liturgy proper began with the transfer to the main altar by the deacons of the Eucharistic gifts, bread and wine, from the *prothesis* chamber or the *skeuophylakion* (lit. “the place where the vessels are kept”), which in Constantinople was usually located outside the church.⁵ This is a ritualization of a utilitarian act, namely the transfer of the offerings given by the congregation. After the reading of the Eucharistic prayers and the consecration of the gifts, the people received communion. The liturgy was probably concluded with another procession, this time from inside the church toward the exit.⁶

If the Divine Liturgy in early Christian Constantinople and other major centers can be characterized as public, corporate and open, in the middle Byzantine period the Eucharist became introverted, compressed and private. The processions preceding the service were largely abandoned and some litanies, antiphons and prayers that were said during those processions were simply added to the beginning of the service. Before the service proper the celebrant performed the *prothesis* rite, during which the bread and wine were prepared. This rite took place in the room to the north of the main apse. The two entrances became truncated appearances of the clergy: in the First Entrance the Gospel book was transferred from the altar into the nave and then back to the altar. The Second Great Entrance consisted of transferring the Eucharistic elements from the north apse, the space where they had been prepared, to the altar, following a “U” course to the center of the main church and back to the sanctuary.

THE ARCHITECTURE

The most common church type in late antiquity was the basilica, essentially a rectangular hall with an apse protruding on one short side, typically the eastern one. The nave was often divided by aisles. There were considerable regional formal variations (e.g. number of aisles, roofing, existence of narthex and/or atrium and so on). The popularity of the type decreased after the sixth century although basilicas continued to be built and used until the end of the empire.

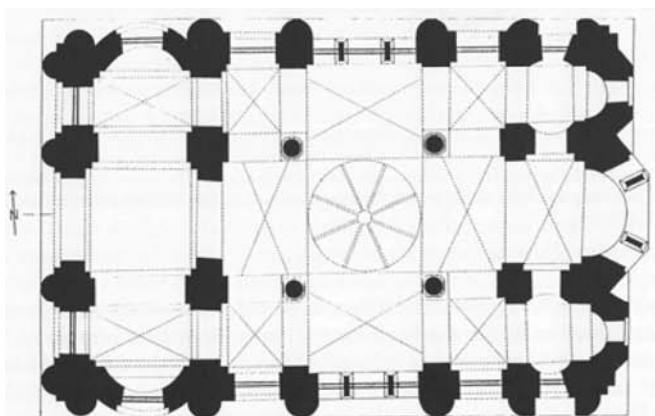
In terms of architecture, the sixth century, and especially the reign of Justinian I (527–65), was an era of great production and great innovation, culminating in, but by no means restricted to, Hagia Sophia, the Great Church of Constantinople.⁷ An unprecedented and largely experimental building, Hagia Sophia combined the rectilinear plan of the basilica with an enormous, soaring dome, which currently rises 55 meters above the floor and has a diameter of c. 53 meters. A central element such as a tower or a dome became a frequent addition to basilicas. Churches such as St Sergios and Bakchos in Constantinople (c. 536) and S. Vitale in Ravenna (c. 548), both of a double-shell octagonal design, reveal the ingenuity of architect and masons in this period.

Elements of early Christian church architecture in Constantinople corresponded

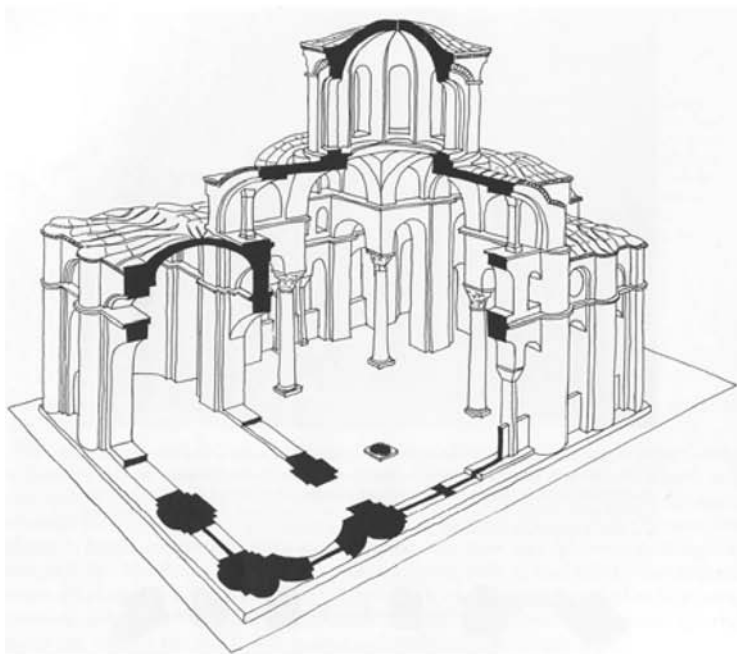
to the markedly processional character of the early liturgy.⁸ The basilica was the most common building type and the prominent longitudinal character of those buildings correlated with the longitudinal course of the celebrants' and the people's processions during the liturgy. The large atrium to the west of the church provided a place for people to gather while awaiting the arrival of the solemn procession. The multitude of entrances observed in early Constantinopolitan basilicas offered easy access to the faithful, who entered at the same time as the clergy. The absence of a tripartite bema, a feature common in other parts of the empire, indicates that the gifts offered by the people were deposited in the structure often called the *skeuophylakion* close to but outside of the church proper. The second-floor galleries in early Constantinopolitan churches, where the catechumens stayed, were connected directly to the outside to permit these individuals to leave quietly after their dismissal at the end of the Liturgy of the Word, without disturbing others. In general the strong horizontal axes of the basilica suited well the numerous processions that took place during the liturgy.

For the so-called "Dark Ages" (from the mid-seventh to mid-ninth centuries) the available information, both textual and archaeological, is scarce and few monuments can be securely dated.⁹ Large-scale churches were still built, but the exterior of the buildings both appeared and were very heavy, lacking the airiness and grace of Justinianic architecture. The church of St Eirene in Constantinople was rebuilt in c. 753 by Constantine V as a domed basilica, a type that enjoyed some popularity. Also very common were cross-domed churches, such as Hagia Sophia in Thessalonika (seventh century?)¹⁰ and the now-destroyed Koimesis at Nicaea (c. 700?), with a cruciform naos topped by a dome and enveloped on three sides by aisles and galleries.

Church architecture of the middle and late Byzantine periods (824–1204/61 and 1204/61–1453) is dominated by buildings of different plans and generally of small dimensions, although earlier types, such as the basilica, continued to be built. Although there is no such a thing as a typical Byzantine church, the cross-in-square type was the most common after the ninth century.¹¹ The Myrelaion (c. 920), built by Emperor Romanos Lekapenos, exhibits the most typical characteristics of this plan (Figures 22.1, 25.3).¹² The church is composed of three elements: the central and largest part known as the naos; the tripartite sanctuary, or bema, to the east; and the narthex, a transverse vestibule, to the west. The naos is usually divided into nine vaulted bays, of which the central bay is topped by a dome carried by four columns (although other kinds of support, such as piers, were also possible). The dome of the Myrelaion, a fairly large building by middle Byzantine standards, measures just over 3 meters in diameter, which is one-tenth of that of Hagia Sophia. The cross-in-square type had two important advantages: because the structural engineering involved was rudimentary, it could be replicated easily, even without the use of architectural drawings, by masons who worked by rule of thumb; and it was very adaptable, offering the possibility of numerous variations in terms of size, space arrangements, and the existence or absence of subsidiary structures, such as chapels.¹³ For example, the north church in the monastery *tou Libos* (c. 907) (Figure 22.2), dedicated to the Theotokos *Panachrantos*, has six additional subsidiary chapels attached to the otherwise typical cross-in-square building: two chapels flank the sanctuary on the ground level and another four are located on the roof.

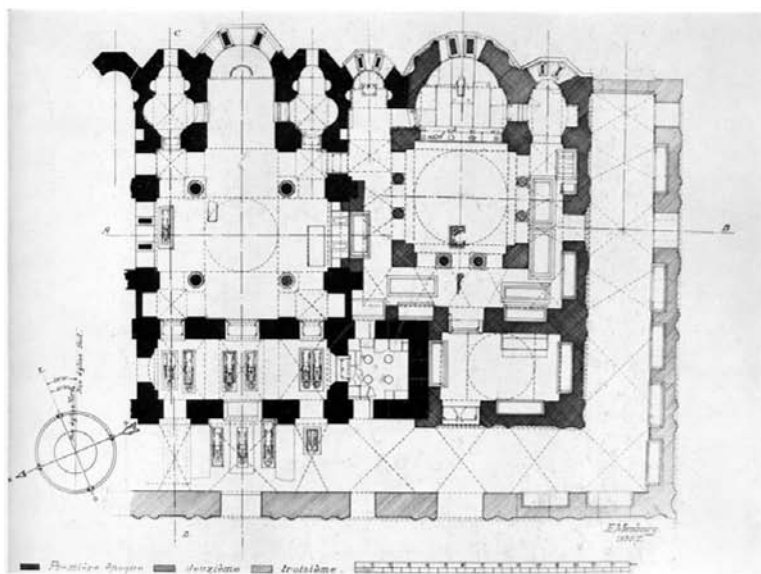


(a)

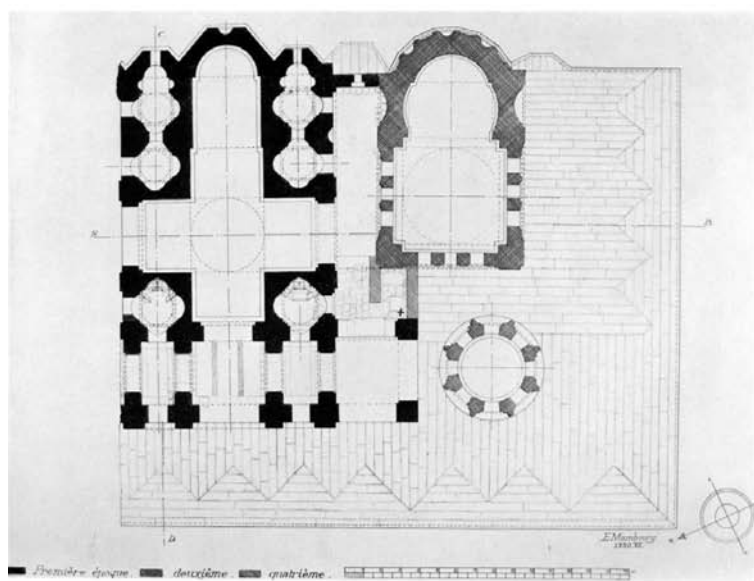


(b)

Figure 22.1 Constantinople, Myrelaion, c. 920: (a) ground plan; (b) axonometric reconstruction, after Striker 1981.



(a)



(b)

Figure 22.2 Constantinople, monastery *tou Libos*, c. 907 (north church) and late thirteenth century (south church and outer ambulatory): (a) ground plan; (b) roof plan, after Macridy 1964: figs 5 and 9. Dumbarton Oaks.

Although the cross-in-square type was the most popular in the capital and the provinces, other solutions were employed. The main church of the Pammakaristos monastery (twelfth century) belonged to the “ambulatory type,” where the central bay is set apart from the rest of the naos by means of piers and columns (Figure 22.3). The church of St George *ton Manganon* (1042–55), now in ruins, was in all likelihood a domed-octagon church. This type became popular in Greece, notable examples being the *katholika*, or main monastery churches of Hosios Loukas and Daphni, both dated to the eleventh century, and the *katholikon* of Nea Moni on the island of Chios, which is a variation of the domed-octagon plan. Kalenderhane Camii (probably the church of Theotokos *Kyriotissa*), one of the last ecclesiastical buildings to be constructed before the advent of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, is a huge cross-domed church.

The variety of solutions in the interior arrangement of churches after Iconoclasm contradicts any idea of a “perfect plan” that was “ideally suited” to the form of the Byzantine ritual of the time. The Divine Liturgy had undergone significant evolution and change after the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843, although this change was gradual and by no means uniform. The intimate interiors of middle and late Byzantine Constantinopolitan churches bespeak a more compressed ritual. Although some outdoor processions continued to occur, the liturgy now took place almost

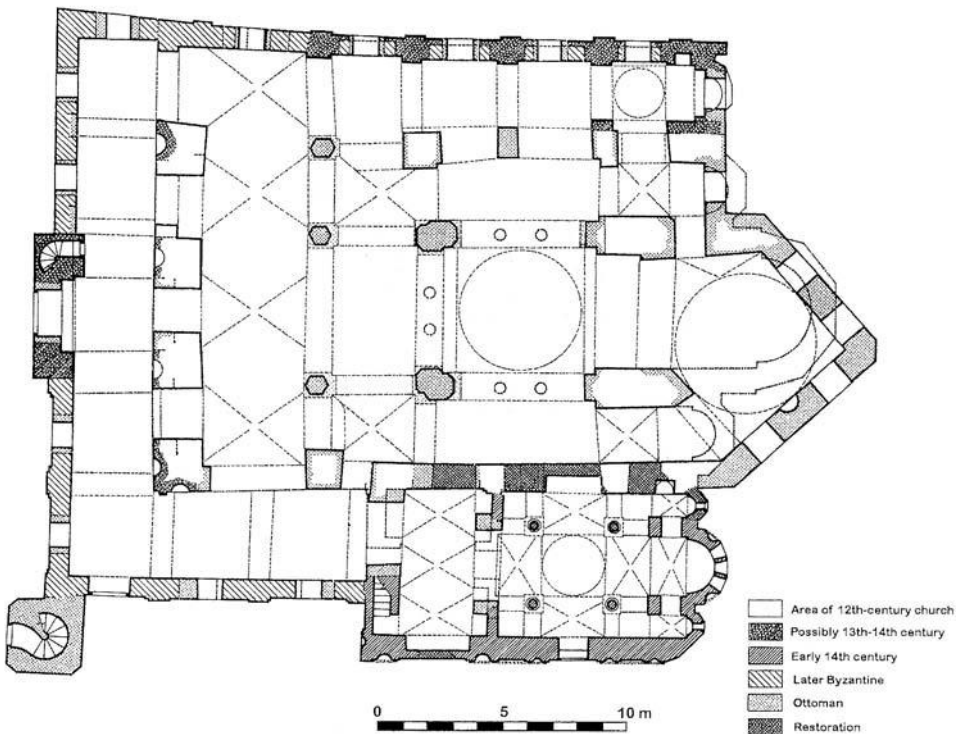


Figure 22.3 Constantinople, Pammakaristos, twelfth century with later additions, ground plan, after Ousterhout 1999: fig. 82. R. Ousterhout.

exclusively inside the church. The two major entrances became brief appearances of the clergy, starting and ending in the sanctuary. Atria fell out of use and disappeared and the external *skeuophylakia* were replaced by the two apsed rooms flanking the main apse.

The role of monasticism in those developments was very significant. Monks were on the winning side in the iconoclastic controversy and as a result monasteries became increasingly independent of episcopal control. Of great importance was the invasion of the urban space by monastic communities during this period: more than 300 monasteries have been recorded in and around Constantinople alone.¹⁴ The monastic ritual strongly influenced the cathedral rite in Constantinople.¹⁵ Cyril Mango has convincingly argued that the cross-in-square type was developed in a monastic context, as it could hold only a limited number of people and lacked internal subdivisions for the segregation of sexes.¹⁶ The monastic liturgy was not stational but confined within the walls of the monastery itself. The mounting importance of monasticism left its mark on both the ritual and the architecture of Byzantium and it is no accident that most medieval churches surviving in Constantinople belonged to monasteries. The history of the Myrelaion is also indicative of new mentality: originally built as a private church, it was subsequently converted into a nunnery.

Although there is no standardization of type, there was certainly a standardization of the spatial concept of a church in the middle Byzantine period. The naos was conceived as a more or less unified *centralized* space, with a dome over its middle. It provided room for congregants to stand and befitted the form of the ritual that took place in it, namely the two processions of the clergy that started and ended in the sanctuary following a U course.

The architecture in Constantinople after 1261 is distinguished by what one might call an “agglomeration of spaces.” Churches were built following types established in the previous period, but the liturgical space was augmented by the addition of numerous auxiliary structures, such as outer ambulatories, *exonarthexes*, open porches and chapels. Whereas in some areas outside the capital, such as Thessalonika, outer ambulatories seemed to have been part of the original planning of the church, in Constantinople such structures were very often added to already existing buildings. The aforementioned monastery *tou Libos* is a key example of this development (Figure 22.2). In the late thirteenth century, Theodora Palaiologina added to the tenth-century church of Theotokos *Panachrantos* a south church, dedicated to St John the Baptist, that incorporated parts of the older building. This had a definite funerary character and function, as it was destined to be the mausoleum of the Palaiologos family. Shortly thereafter, an outer ambulatory was constructed, surrounding the whole complex from the south and west sides. Such additions were common in Palaiologan Constantinople. Theodore Metochites’ restoration of the Chora monastery included the addition to the north of the late eleventh- or early twelfth-century naos of a two-storied annex, a narthex and exonarthex to the west, embellished with marble revetments and mosaics, and a funeral chapel to the south, decorated with exquisite frescoes. Similarly, a funerary chapel, built by Maria Branaina Palaiologina, was added to the south of the aforementioned *katholikon* of the Pammakaristos monastery (Figure 22.3), as well an outer ambulatory at a later date. Several additions, including an exonarthex, a

two-story narthex, and maybe a chapel and a porch (now lost) were made to Vefa Kilise Camii.¹⁷

* * *

In the following I examine in detail the various parts of the church and the rituals they housed. For this purpose I divide the church into the following: sanctuary or bema; naos; narthex; and auxiliary spaces (exonarthexes, ambulatories, crypts and chapels).

THE SANCTUARY

The sanctuary was the holiest and most essential part of the church, as it contained the altar, on which the Eucharist was celebrated. According to Symeon of Thessalonika (fifteenth century): “In it [= the church] the altar is built and the church is holy because of the altar. Without the altar, it is not a church but rather a house of prayer.”¹⁸

In the early churches of Constantinople the bema included just the main apse, although tripartite arrangements were found in other areas of the empire.¹⁹ After Iconoclasm the tripartite bema in the east of the church became the norm with few exceptions. In Atik Mustafa Pasa Camii (Byzantine name unknown), probably dating to the ninth century, and in the north church of the monastery *tou Libos*, the tripartite bema is fully and harmoniously integrated with the rest of the building, indicating a standardization of liturgical planning that remained essentially unchanged thereafter. The altar was located in the main apse, usually the largest of the three. Typically made of stone and sometimes decorated with gold and silver revetments and precious stones, the altar acquired several layers of symbolism: it was interpreted, among other things, as Christ’s tomb, as the table of the Last Supper and as the throne of God.

The development and function, liturgical and otherwise, of the two apsed rooms flanking the main apse are still debated.²⁰ The north room, the prothesis, is used today for the preparation of bread and wine for the Eucharist. When it acquired this function, and whether its appearance was connected with the development of the prothesis rite,²¹ are questions that need further investigation. It is safe to assume, however, that at least in the tenth century, and perhaps as early as the eighth, the north room was used primarily for the prothesis rite. Before the end of Iconoclasm this rite was a rather simple affair, consisting essentially of a practical preparation of the elements accompanied by a prayer.²² In the years after the ninth century the prothesis gradually developed into a lengthy service that included a series of highly ritualized gestures, such as the removal of the *amnos* (lit. “lamb”), the principal, stamped portion of the *prosphoron* (lit. “offering,” the bread loaf) with a lance, and its placement on the paten, the pouring of wine and water into the chalice, and the covering of both chalice and paten with liturgical veils, called *aeres* (sing. *aer*, lit. “air”). All this was accompanied with prayers and censing. The actions that took place during the prothesis, originally purely utilitarian, acquired symbolic meaning: thus, the lance came to symbolize the lance that pierced Christ’s side on the cross; the *amnos* was interpreted as Christ in both Bethlehem and Golgotha.²³ Such an extended service with such potent symbolic weight found an appropriate and dedicated architectural setting in the prothesis room and in some cases the rite influenced

the iconography of this space.²⁴ In rubrics contained in liturgical *diataxeis* from the middle Byzantine period the proximity of the prothesis room to the altar is certainly presumed.²⁵ Instructions in some middle Byzantine *typika* (foundation documents) definitely prove that the prothesis took place in the sanctuary. For example, the *typikon* of the monastery of St Mamas (1158) stipulates that:

At the beginning, however, of the sixth hour both the priest and the deacon who are on duty that day along with the assistant ecclesiarch must make a genuflection to the superior, and, while the former must enter into the holy sanctuary to perform the rite of the prothesis, the latter must go off to strike the large semantron.²⁶

The room south of the apse is in current usage called the *diakonikon* (lit. “the place of the deacons”). The term appears already in the fourth century,²⁷ but it cannot always be connected with this specific place; nor did the diakonikon room seem to have the same purpose everywhere. In all likelihood it was used as a sacristy, a place for the safekeeping of holy vessels and ecclesiastical vestments, and for the vesting of clergy.²⁸ In some instances the diakonikon is named in a monastic context as a place for the hearing of confessions²⁹ and for a collation meal after communion,³⁰ although the use of the term does not necessarily imply the south room in the bema.

THE TEMPLON

The sanctuary is separated from the nave by a screen, usually made of marble, called the *templon*.³¹ Originally a low and fairly open parapet, by the thirteenth century the templon had become taller, consisting of colonnettes carrying an epistyle. Parapet slabs occupied the lower inter-columnar parts and curtains, and eventually icons its upper parts. Thus, the templon indicated the limits of the sanctuary, the holiest part of the church, and as such it had a dual function: it was a liminal space not to be crossed by anybody but clergy; and it obstructed the congregation’s visual contact with the liturgical action in the sanctuary, thereby heightening the sense of sanctity (and mystery) that surrounded the Eucharist.³²

THE NAOS

In the middle and late Byzantine periods the naos, the main part of the church, was usually a square (Figure 22.1). This space could be completely unified in the case of the domed-octagon churches; divided into bays in the cross-in-square churches; or the main bay under the dome could be set apart by means of piers and columns in churches of the ambulatory type.

The naos was the place where the faithful congregated to attend the liturgy even in early Christian times,³³ and this continued to be the case later.³⁴ Although men and women were segregated, the details of this separation are unknown due to the lack of sufficient evidence.³⁵ Galleries, when they existed, were the preferred women’s space, although Robert Taft has proved conclusively that women were not restricted to them.³⁶ The internal arrangements of some early Christian basilicas in which the nave was cut off from the aisles allowed for separate spaces within the naos.³⁷ In

most middle and late Byzantine churches such internal divisions did not exist. Furthermore, gender segregation becomes a moot point in the case of monastic churches, where members of the opposite sex generally were not allowed even to enter the monastery.

In the middle and late Byzantine periods most liturgical actions took place inside the sanctuary. However, as mentioned, the clergy made two brief appearances outside the bema during the two short processions: during the Little Entrance the Gospel book was paraded from the altar through the naos and then back to the altar; and during the Great Entrance the chalice and the paten were brought from the prothesis to the altar. The area in front of the sanctuary was also the place where the laity received communion at the conclusion of the Eucharist, although people participated in communion infrequently, usually on Easter and other important feast-days.³⁸

On occasion the spaces surrounding the central bay of the naos accommodated tombs. This is especially the case with buildings belonging to the “ambulatory type,” such as the church of St John in the monastery *tou Libos* (Figure 22.2) and the katholikon of Pammakaristos (Figure 22.3). The tombs in the ambulatory, because of their proximity to the liturgical epicenter, were prestigious, highly desirable and evidently available only to the highest levels of society: the inner ambulatory of the church of St John *tou Libos* housed the tombs of Theodora Palaiologina and several other members of her family, including her son Emperor Andronikos II.

THE NARTHEX

The narthex is the oblong space that preceded the naos. In the early Christian churches of Constantinople narthexes were used for the preparation of liturgical entrances into the naos³⁹ and perhaps by catechumens and penitents. After the tenth century the narthex had a multitude of uses.⁴⁰

The narthex acquired a very distinct funerary character. In some instances the coffin was brought into the narthex, where the funeral rite also was sung, along with memorial services for the departed.⁴¹ Most importantly, it became a favored place for the tombs of people of importance,⁴² especially of founders and their families, prominent members of society, and high-ranking clergymen and leaders of a monastic community. In the church of Theotokos *Panachrantos* in the monastery *tou Libos* in Constantinople, for example (Figure 22.2), five marble sarcophagi were placed under the floor of the narthex (with four more outside the building).⁴³ The sarcophagi in the narthex were arrayed in pairs, sited in front of each of the three doors leading to the naos, with the feet and faces of the dead appropriately facing east toward the rising sun and the Second Coming. Evidence from other regions – Cappadocia,⁴⁴ Greece⁴⁵ and the Balkans⁴⁶ – indicates that the practice of burying the dead in narthexes was common throughout the empire.

The narthex was used occasionally for some important ceremonies, such as the Washing of the Feet,⁴⁷ which took place on Holy Thursday, and for the Blessing of the Waters.⁴⁸ The former was associated with the image of this event that sometimes was depicted in this space, as in the katholikon of Hosios Loukas in Greece. It is not clear, however, whether this use of the narthex was widespread.

A host of services, usually of secondary importance, took place regularly in the narthex, especially in monasteries. Certain *typika* instruct that some of the Hours,

including the midnight office, Compline and Matins, be read in the narthex.⁴⁹ Such services were evidently read in the narthex for the sake of convenience: as they did not last long and did not require the use of the altar, the attendants could be in and out quickly without using the naos and the sanctuary, thus eliminating the need to prepare these spaces for the liturgy.

The sources also attest to other occasional uses of the narthex. In some monasteries the spiritual father of the community heard confessions in the narthex.⁵⁰ Some “services of holy prayers” were read in there, obviously minor services and prayers for specific situations ranging from illness to betrothal, usually found at the end of the *Euchologion* (prayer book used by the clergy).⁵¹ Theodore Balsamon, a twelfth-century canonist, testifies that the narthex was the place from where the penitents and, quite inappropriately in his opinion, menstruating women attended the liturgy.⁵² St Athanasios of Athos ordered the sinners in his monastic community to stand in the narthex and ask for forgiveness from each of the brethren.⁵³ A certain category of penitents, the ἀκροώμενοι (“the ones who listen” as opposed to the ones who actually participate in the service), should stay in the narthex, according to John Apokaukos (d. 1233)⁵⁴ and Matthew Blastares, a fourteenth-century canonist.⁵⁵

There is a tendency to interpret the decorative programs of the narthex as products of liturgical influence.⁵⁶ Although a comprehensive treatment of Byzantine narthex decoration needs still to be written, it is evident that these programs were far from standardized.⁵⁷ In fact, they present a great variety in both the selection of iconographic themes and their arrangement.

GALLERIES

The gallery or *catechoumeneion* (ὑπερῶον, κατηχούμενα, κατηχουμενεῖα) was a corridor situated over the narthex and aisles of a church, usually opened to the naos through arcades or colonnades. After the seventh century, galleries became uncommon, but they reappeared with some frequency after the thirteenth century in provincial capitals such as Mystra. Galleries seem to have been used as a means of segregation of genders and of social classes. In the early churches of Constantinople they were the place for catechumens and women.⁵⁸ In Hagia Sophia a part of the gallery was used as an imperial lodge, from which the empress and occasionally the emperor attended the services.⁵⁹ The emperor also assisted at services from the galleries of other churches in Constantinople.⁶⁰ In palatial churches galleries were very likely used exclusively by the emperor and his court or, in the provinces, by local rulers. In other cases they might have functioned as libraries, administrative offices or sacristies.⁶¹

Although a significant part of palace rituals took place in the galleries, liturgical activity there was insubstantial. Some churches, such as Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, contained chapels in the *catechoumeneia* that might have been used for private devotions.⁶²

OUTER AMBULATORIES AND EXONARTHEXES⁶³

In the late Byzantine churches of Constantinople and elsewhere, outer ambulatories and exonarthexes were used primarily to accommodate tombs. The outer ambulatory

in the monastery *tou Libos*, for example, contained seven tombs (Figure 22.2). Several *arcosolia* were located in the outer ambulatory of Pammakaristos and in the exonarthexes of Chora and Kilise Camii. Tombs are also found in the outer ambulatories of churches in Thessalonika, such as St Nicholas Orphanos. Outer ambulatories sometimes housed chapels, although this appears to be the case more in Thessalonika than in Constantinople. One such chapel was originally located in the north-eastern end of the ambulatory at the Pammakaristos (Figure 22.3). Similarly, chapels occupy the eastern ends of the outer ambulatories in the churches of the Holy Apostles and St Aikaterini in Thessalonika.

Outer ambulatories and exonarthexes had other functions similar to those of the narthex, and the Byzantines did not necessarily differentiate between the two. The *typikon* of Kecharitomene, for example, stipulates that some of the Hours and Compline should be sung in the exonarthex.⁶⁴ The funeral office for a dead nun at Kecharitomene was also to be sung there.⁶⁵ Similarly funerals took place in the exonarthex of the Mamas and Heliou Bomon monasteries.⁶⁶

CRYPTS AND OTHER COMPARABLE SPACES

Although by no means a standard feature, crypts are found in some early Christian and Byzantine churches. Both the Stoudios and the Chalkoprateia basilicas in Constantinople were equipped with cruciform crypts in front of the main apses which were accessed through a small staircase.⁶⁷ In all likelihood they were used for relics: such a crypt, located under the church of St John at Oxeia, contained the miraculous relics of St Artemios.⁶⁸ The first phase of Odalar Camii (ninth to tenth centuries, Byzantine name unknown) contained a two-room crypt under the bema. As it was decorated with an image of the Theotokos flanked by two angels, it probably contained a Marian relic.⁶⁹ The relics of St Babylas and the eighty-four children who were martyred with him were kept in a crypt called *kataphyge* within the church of St Anthimos in the monastery of Chora.⁷⁰ The crypt underneath the katholikon of Hosios Loukas (eleventh century) in Greece clearly had a funerary character, as it housed the (eventually empty) tomb of Holy Luke along with at least two others, presumably containing important members of the monastic community.⁷¹ At a later point this crypt was retro-fitted with a bema, including a marble templon, and it presumably functioned as a church. The form and function of crypts in Byzantine churches never became standardized.

Related to the crypts are substructures on which churches often were built. Originally having a purely utilitarian purpose, in some cases they were later transformed into functioning liturgical spaces. For example, the substructure of the church of the Myrelaion church was used for burials in the Palaiologan period,⁷² and that of the second church of Odalar Camii (mid-twelfth century) was filled with tombs, although it appears that this happened only gradually.⁷³

CHAPELS

Subsidiary chapels, attached and functionally related to larger complexes, were fairly common in Christian architecture in both East and West. In Byzantium their most distinctive characteristic was a lack of formal standardization as they present an

extraordinary variety of plans, dimensions and locations.⁷⁴ They could be diminutive cross-in-square spaces or large single-apsed halls. A church might have a single chapel or several of them. They are attached to the north, south or even the western side of the main church, sometimes even incorporated within the plan. They are located on the ground floor or in the galleries. The latter could be accessed either from inside the church or exclusively from the outside.

This variety of forms is accompanied by a heterogeneity in function, liturgical and otherwise.⁷⁵ One of the primary and earliest uses of chapels was for the exhibition and safekeeping of saints' relics. For example, the Chalkoprateia basilica had at least three chapels containing relics: the *Hagia Soros* (lit. "holy reliquary"), which housed the Virgin's belt or girdle, and the chapel of St James, where the relics of James, Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, Symeon and the Holy Innocents were kept.⁷⁶ Another cherished relic was the Virgin's mantle, which was kept in the church of the Blachernai, built by the empress Pulcheria in the fifth century.⁷⁷ The relics of St Stephen the Younger (d. 764) were kept in the monastery *tou Diou* in Constantinople in a chapel dedicated to St Stephen the Protomartyr. The monastery *tou Libos* treasured the relics of a certain St Irene in a separate chapel.⁷⁸ The monastery of Stoudios in Constantinople had an impressive array of relics, including the head of St John the Baptist housed in one of the chapels of the monastery.⁷⁹ In this sense chapels function as architectural reliquaries offering an appropriate setting for the relic.

Chapels often had a funerary and commemorative character if they housed the tombs of notable laymen and clergy, especially founders: this burial solution might relate to the prohibition of burying the dead inside a Byzantine church. The *heroon*, sandwiched between the two churches of the monastery of Christ Pantokrator in Constantinople, included the tombs of, among others, Emperor John II Komnenos and his wife Irene. The *parekklesion* at the Chora monastery contained the tombs of the founder of the monastery, Theodore Metochites, along with those of other members of the aristocracy. Similarly, Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotes and his wife Maria were buried in the chapel attached to the south side of the katholikon of Pammakaristos (Figure 22.2). Theodore and Nicholas of Studios, among others, were buried in the chapel of the Forty Martyrs, which was located to the east of the Stoudios monastery's main church.

Liturgical activity in these chapels is difficult to assess. The *typikon* of the Great Church,⁸⁰ the liturgical ordinal of the rite used at Hagia Sophia in the ninth and tenth centuries, indicates that most chapels were used infrequently. The celebration was usually associated with the commemoration of the saint or saints whose relics were kept in a particular chapel but this was not always the case.⁸¹ Thus, the patriarchal party celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the aforementioned chapel of St James in the Chalkoprateia on 23 October, the day of the commemoration of the martyrdom of James, Zachariah and Symeon;⁸² the chapel of St James had relics of all these saints. The liturgy was celebrated there another five times during the liturgical year.⁸³

Chapels have been interpreted as indicating the privatization of worship in the middle Byzantine period,⁸⁴ and "private" liturgies were undoubtedly celebrated in those places occasionally. However, the existence of chapels, both in churches and private residences, was not an exclusively medieval phenomenon, and neither was private devotion for that matter. In the examples pertaining to the commemoration of St James cited above, the liturgy was anything but private and sources indicate

that chapels were used for corporate worship as well. For example, the *Synaxarion* of the Theotokos Evergetis monastery stipulates the following:

It should be known that during the Great Lent both on weekdays and on Sundays the liturgy is celebrated in the [main] church. But on Saturdays [it is celebrated] in the chapels.⁸⁵

The life of Michael Synkellos (ninth century) also offers evidence for the use by the whole monastic community of the chapel of St Ignatios, located inside the church of St Anthemios in the monastery of Chora.⁸⁶

It has been proposed that the reason for the existence of chapels in early Christian and Byzantine churches was the strict prohibition from celebrating the Divine Liturgy twice in one day at the same altar.⁸⁷ While that may be true, one might wonder if this was the case for the Theotokos *tou Libos*, which initially was equipped with six additional *parekklesia*. There is certainly no indication that the Nea, a palace chapel, that also had numerous altars, would have been used as frequently.

The multiplication of chapels might be due to the Byzantine perception of the role of saints in a person's salvation. Based on the idea that the earthly court is a reflection of the heavenly one, the Theotokos and the saints took on the function of courtiers and high officials, interceding on behalf of humanity.⁸⁸ Churches and monasteries were built for various reasons, including but not limited to the remission of sins. *Typika*, foundation epigrams preserved in the *Anthologia Palatina*, founders' inscriptions in churches, and hagiographical texts, demonstrate that one of the most important reasons was to please the Mother of God or the saint to whom the church was dedicated so that they would become constant companions in the hardships of this life, and, most importantly, intercessors with Christ on the patron's behalf for his or her salvation at the Day of Judgment. The intercessory qualities of the saints are most vividly expressed in the images of the Great Deesis, as this aspect of the composition was crystallized after the ninth century.⁸⁹ The Byzantine theology of saints was largely based on the Roman model of patronage: the person renders services to the saint in order to become a *persona grata*, and finally to be saved.⁹⁰ The logical conclusion of this idea is that the more saints one pleases, the more protectors against evil one will have in this life and the more defenders before Christ at the final day of reckoning. In Constantinople and elsewhere, the continuously increasing number of chapels, as well as churches and monasteries in general, cannot be explained as a response to any actual need for more liturgical space.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

We return to the question that informs this chapter: what is the relationship between religious architecture and ritual in Byzantium? For the early churches of Constantinople Mathews has proved that there was a direct correlation between the two. Unfortunately no comparable comprehensive study exists for other areas of the empire, although Mathews' conclusions might apply elsewhere as well. After the ninth century, however, such a neat correspondence between spatial arrangement and ritual no longer existed. Middle and late Byzantine churches in Constantinople exhibited not a standardization of forms but rather a standardization of concepts.

Thus, the basic elements of the architecture corresponded to the form that the Divine Liturgy had acquired after the ninth century: the tripartite bema, with the altar in the center where most liturgical action took place, a special room for the prothesis rite to the north and (probably) a sacristy to the south; a centrally planned naos, occupied primarily by the congregation, where the clergy appeared only during the formal entrances; and the narthex. The specifics, however, vary considerably and the diversity of architectural forms cannot always be explained in liturgical terms.

The use of the narthex is particularly indicative of the problems inherent in an examination of ritual and architecture. The space used for the preparation of official entrances in the early churches of Constantinople, the narthex, was still present in the monuments of the middle and late Byzantine periods even though its original function had ceased. But the multitude of services that took place in the narthex after the ninth century had little to do with its spatial configuration nor does the latter reflect any of the exigencies of the rite. Memorial services took place in the narthex because very often tombs of founders or eminent members of a monastic community were placed there. Burying the dead in the narthex was a concession intended to circumvent the canonical prohibition of tombs inside churches. Services such as the Hours and Matins were read in the narthex for the sake of convenience, as was the hearing of confessions. Even more elaborate rites such as the Washing of the Feet and the Blessing of the Waters do not seem to have any connection to or influence on the form of the narthex.

The relationship between architecture and ritual has been approached with a “cause-and-effect” methodology that disregards the fact that buildings continued to be used for a long time after their construction, ritual itself continued to develop and, as a result, the original use of a church and its parts (such as the narthex) might change or have new uses added to the original one. The profusion of services conducted in the narthex is the best example of this process of “acquired uses,” but it is not the only one. In the story of St Stephen the Younger mentioned above we learn that his reliquary was placed in the chapel of St Stephen the Protomartyr in the monastery *tou Diou* in Constantinople; this chapel served to secure and exhibit the eighth-century saint’s relics. However, this could not have been its original function. It was not unusual that the dedication of a chapel does not correspond to the relics kept in it.

It is clear that further research is required to explore more fully the interaction between architecture and ritual; this chapter merely touches upon some of the broad issues in this complicated relationship. Unquestionably, the form of the middle and late Byzantine ritual, and especially the form of the Divine Liturgy, influenced the architecture of the period and vice versa. But this is just one aspect of this phenomenon. The adaptability of the Byzantine rite resulted in occurrences where the selection of the space in which some of its services were performed had little to do with the latter’s architectural configuration and a great deal to do with other, sometimes irrelevant, considerations.

NOTES

- 1 For the architecture of the capital see Van Millingen 1912; Ebersolt 1913; Janin 1969; Mathews 1971; Mathews 1976; Theis 2005; Toivanen 2007.

- 2 On the history of the Byzantine rite, see primarily Taft 1992; see also Arranz 1976; Schulz 1986; Wybrew 1989; Taft 1995; Taft 1997a: 203–32; Pott 2000; Taft 2006b. There are specialized studies on several aspects of the Byzantine rite: see selectively Mateos 1971; Bertonière 1972; Taft 1975; Taft 1986; Janeras 1988; Taft 1991; Taft 2000b.
- 3 The Stoudite liturgical *typika* supplanted the cathedral rite of the Great Church after the recapture of Constantinople by the Byzantines in 1261. During the period 1204–61, the Neo-Sabaitic rite (namely an adaptation of the Stoudite *typika* by Palestinian monastic communities following the rite of the Lavra of St Sabas) replaced, in its Athonite reduction, the Stoudite rite, see Taft 1988.
- 4 For the late antique stationary liturgy in Rome, Constantinople and Jerusalem, see Baldovin 1987. See also Berger 2001.
- 5 Taft 1975: 178–203; Taft 1997b; Taft 1998a. The *skeuophylakion* of Hagia Sophia, a rotunda, is still standing close to the north-east corner of the basilica.
- 6 Mathews 1971: 173.
- 7 The bibliography on Hagia Sophia is extensive. See, among others, Mainstone 1988; Mark and Çakmak 1992; Buchwald 1998.
- 8 On this see the still unsurpassed study by Mathews 1971.
- 9 For the architecture of this period, see Ruggieri 1991; Ruggieri 1995; Ousterhout 2001b.
- 10 Theodoridou 1994; see also Krautheimer 1986: 291–5, where the building is dated to the early eighth century.
- 11 Theories regarding the origins of the cross-in-square type have been aptly summarized in Lange 1986; Smuck 1991. See also Buchwald 1992; Buchwald 1994; Ousterhout 1999: 7–24.
- 12 On the Myrelaion, see Striker 1981.
- 13 For the different versions of the type in Greece, for example, see Orlandos 1939–40: 5–10. On the topic of originality and inventiveness in Byzantine architecture, see Ousterhout 1995; Ousterhout 1996; Ousterhout 1999: 15–25 and 86–127; Bouras 2005.
- 14 Janin 1969; see also Mango 1985: 197–8; Charanis 1971; Bryer 1979; Talbot 1987.
- 15 Taft 1992: 52–75
- 16 Mango 1986: 178–80.
- 17 Subsidiary spaces such as outer ambulatories and porches are found in other areas of the empire such as Thessalonika and Mystra.
- 18 PG 155: 305.
- 19 Descoedres 1983.
- 20 Mathews 1982; Descoedres 1983; Teteriatnikov 1996; Asutay-Fleissig 1998; Altripp 1998; Varalis 2006a; Varalis 2006b, with earlier bibliography.
- 21 For the evolution of the prothesis rite see Descoedres 1983: 79–126; Pott 2000: 169–96, with further bibliography.
- 22 In Constantinople this took place in the *skeuophylakion*.
- 23 PG 140: 429; Duffy 1992: poem 58.
- 24 Altripp 1998.
- 25 As in cod. 662 (twelfth or thirteenth century) published in Trempelas 1935.
- 26 Eustratiades 1928: ch. 31. The translation in *BMFD*: 1015 is vague. The same paragraph is repeated almost verbatim in the *typikon* of Heliou Bomon, see, *BMFD*: 1072.
- 27 For the Council of Laodikeia (380) see Ralles and Potles 1852–9: vol. 6, 482–3. See also the mention of a diakonikon where a portion of the True Cross was kept in the *Life* of Euthymios by Cyril of Skythopolis (sixth century) in Schwartz 1939: 69.
- 28 See e.g. the testimony from the seventh-century *Life* of St Theodore of Sykeon: “And since the time for the next day’s Eucharistic assembly was approaching, the archdeacon brought forth the chalice to the diakonikon and uncovered it so he might show it to the most holy [father, i.e. Theodore] and conduct the prothesis rite with it,” Festugière 1970: vol. 1, §42.
- 29 Rosenqvist 1986: 40; cf. with 54 (life of St Irene of Chrysobalanton, tenth century); *BMFD*: 1137 (Rule of Neilos for the monastery of Mahairas in Cyprus, thirteenth century).
- 30 As in the eleventh-century regulations of Nikon of the Black Mountain, *BMFD*: 405.
- 31 On this topic see the relevant essays in Gerstel 2006c; and especially Gerstel 2006a, also for earlier bibliography.
- 32 See Taft 2006a.

- 33 Mathews 1971: 117–25; Taft 1998b: 28–31.
- 34 On the “expected” attitude of worshippers see Ware 1990. See also Gerstel 2006b; Gerstel and Talbot 2006.
- 35 On this topic see Taft 1998b; Gerstel 1998.
- 36 Taft 1998b.
- 37 Peschlow 2006.
- 38 Taft 2000b; Taft 2006a.
- 39 Mathews 1971: 138–52.
- 40 See Siomkos 2006, also for earlier bibliography.
- 41 For just a few examples see Velkovska 2001: 38; PG 151: 677; *BMFD*: 1020, 1077.
- 42 Ćurčić 1971; Bache 1989; Gerstel 1998: 98–102; Kalopissi-Verti 2006: 130–1.
- 43 Marinis 2009.
- 44 Teteriatnikov 1996: 165–82.
- 45 Laskaris 2000: 104–44.
- 46 Ćurčić 1984.
- 47 Mateos 1962–3: vol. 2, 72–5; *BMFD*: 652. See also Tomeković 1988; Tronzo 1994.
- 48 As stipulated in the *typikon* of Kecharitomene (1110–16), *BMFD*: 652. See also Siomkos 2006: 63–4.
- 49 As in the *typikon* of Studios (after 842), *BMFD*: 99; in the rule of Manuel for the monastery of the Theotokos Eleousa (1085–1106), *BMFD*: 176; in the *typikon* of Kecharitomene, *BMFD*: 687–8; in the *typikon* of Pantokrator (1136), *BMFD*: 739.
- 50 As in the *typikon* of Neilos Damilas for the convent of the Mother of God Pantanassa at Baionia on Crete, in *BMFD*: 1473; and in the *typika* of Theodora for the convent of SS Kosmas and Damian and the monastery *tou Libos* in Constantinople, in *BMFD*: 1292 and 1269.
- 51 Ralles and Potles 1852–9: vol. 4, 7–9.
- 52 Ralles and Potles 1852–9: vol. 4, 7–9.
- 53 Noret 1982: section 45, line 46.
- 54 Bees 1971–4: 145 (epistle 91).
- 55 Ralles and Potles 1852–9: vol. 6, 363–4. This was a practice of the early Church but it is unlikely that it was still enforced in the thirteenth century.
- 56 As in Todić 1997; Gerstel 1998.
- 57 See e.g. the excellent overview in Siomkos 2006: 63–6. The evidence, however, is from disparate sources, locations and periods, and cannot be used for any general conclusions.
- 58 Mathews 1971: 125–34; Taft 1998b.
- 59 Taft 1998b: 41–2.
- 60 Taft 1998b: 42–7.
- 61 Siomkos 2006: 66–8.
- 62 Mathews 1971: 129.
- 63 For ambulatories see Chatzetryphonos 2004.
- 64 *BMFD*: 687–8.
- 65 *BMFD*: 699.
- 66 *BMFD*: 1020, 1077.
- 67 Mathews 1971: 27, 32–3. For crypts under the altar in early Christian churches see Sodini 1981.
- 68 Crisafulli and Nesbitt 1997: 9–19.
- 69 Westphalen 1998: 40–2, 106–10.
- 70 Cunningham 1991: 125.
- 71 Connor 1991.
- 72 Striker 1981: 30–1.
- 73 Westphalen 1998: 43–7.
- 74 Ćurčić 1977.
- 75 See Babić 1969 for the fundamental study on the function of chapels.
- 76 The list of relics is given by the English pilgrim who visited Constantinople in the twelfth century, for which see Mercati 1936: 150.
- 77 Janin 1969: 23.
- 78 *BMFD*: 1267.
- 79 Janin 1969: 434–5, 439.
- 80 The *typikon* survives in several manuscripts of which Jerusalem Hagiou Staurou cod. 40 (tenth to

eleventh century) and Patmos cod. 266 (tenth century) preserve relatively complete texts. For the respective critical editions see Mateos 1962–3; Dmitrievskij 1965: vol. I, 1–163.

81 See e.g. Mateos 1962–3: vol. 1, 42, 348.

82 Mateos 1962–3: vol. 1, 74.

83 Mateos 1962–3: vol. 1, 74, 92, 160, 224–6, 276, 280.

84 See, primarily, Mathews 1982.

85 Jordan 2005: 380–1.

86 Cunningham 1991: 126.

87 Babić 1969: 9–10. This prohibition dates to as early as the second century and is found in the letter of Ignatios, bishop of Antioch, to the Christians in Philadelphia, Asia Minor, see PG 5: 700B.

88 See Woodfin in this volume.

89 On the Deesis see Cutler 1987.

90 Mango 1980: 158–9. See also Hackel 2001.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

CELESTIAL HIERARCHIES AND EARTHLY HIERARCHIES IN THE ART OF THE BYZANTINE CHURCH



Warren T. Woodfin

In my opinion a hierarchy is a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine. And it is uplifted to the imitation of God in proportion to the enlightenments divinely given to it. The beauty of God – so simple, so good, so much the source of perfection – is completely uncontaminated by dissimilarity. It reaches out to grant every being, according to merit, a share of light and then through a divine sacrament, in harmony and peace, it bestows on each of those being perfected its own form.¹

INTRODUCTION

The idea that earthly things are reflections of heavenly realities was part of the package of Neoplatonic ideas that Byzantium inherited from late antiquity. The idea of the resemblance between earthly and heavenly realms was intensified and given specific content by the biblical tradition and its interpretation by the Greek Fathers. To give a somewhat idiosyncratic example, the sixth-century *Christian Topography* that has traditionally gone under the name of Cosmas Indicopleustes² seeks to explain the visible universe in terms of a heavenly prototype. The author rejects the old Ptolemaic notion of the universe as a series of concentric spheres. Instead, he bases his model of heaven and earth on the Tabernacle, the plans for which were revealed to Moses on Mt Sinai, for this is the divinely revealed model of the entire world (τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου τὸ ἐκμαγεῖον).³ The inhabited world is described as flat and rectangular, something proved to the author of the *Christian Topography* not only by his own travels, but by the dimensions of the Table of the Shewbread, which is twice as long as it is wide, and surrounded by a border of a palm's breadth, corresponding to the narrow margin of earth surrounding the ocean. Just as the curtain divides the tabernacle between the outer sanctuary and the Holy of Holies, so the firmament divides the world and the visible heavens from the Kingdom of Heaven that is above the firmament. Although the specific application of such thinking in the *Christian Topography* is far from typical⁴ – most educated Byzantines continued to believe in antipodes – the idea that the visible world and its institutions reflected the realities of the invisible, heavenly sphere, was both widespread and long-lived in Byzantium.⁵ This mirroring of earth and heaven was present equally in

the intellectual world both of the Church and of the court, but its visual expression emerged most prominently through a dialogue between the two. It is thanks to the encounter with imperial expressions of this ideology, both ceremonial and visual, that the Byzantine Church arrived at a uniquely forceful artistic statement of its own continuity with the heavenly hierarchy.

THE IMPERIAL REALM AS IMAGE OF HEAVEN

Despite Pseudo-Dionysios' early articulation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as a reflection of the heavenly one, in the middle Byzantine period such parallels between earth and heaven were developed most clearly in the art and rhetoric of the imperial court.⁶ Panegyrics recited at imperial audiences make the comparison between the heavenly court and its earthly counterpart explicit. Paul Magdalino has likened official encomia to the images impressed on Byzantine coins, which show the emperor on the obverse and Christ on the reverse side. By insisting on the mimetic relationship between the ruler and Christ, such oratory depicts the emperor as the legitimate representative of the divine power.⁷ In his oration at the accession of Manuel I, Michael Italikos puns on the emperor's name and its resemblance to the name Emmanuel:

You dwell here below as a living and moving statue of the King above who made you king, O emperor . . . If God is expressed in both names, he is the first and heavenly God, while you are the second and earthly one.⁸

This topos of the emperor's God-like status on earth, although given a special flavor by the opportunities to play on his name, is by no means confined to Manuel's reign. Nor was the resemblance between heaven and earth confined solely to the person of the emperor. In an elaborate series of metaphors, the eleventh-century author John Mauroπους compares being introduced into the emperor's presence to Moses' glimpse of God on Sinai, and the path to the emperor's throne, guarded by courtiers, to the way into Eden, blocked by the cherubim with flaming sword.⁹

Although we are much poorer in textual sources that treat imperial ceremonial directly, in these also we see an emphasis on the mimetic aspect of court ritual. In *De cerimoniis* we are faced with the rather startling fact that the *loros*, the imperial scarf decked with gems and pearls and the imperial symbol par excellence in the visual arts, was in fact also worn by courtiers on certain occasions such as the imperial Easter banquet.¹⁰ Its shared use at court serves a mimetic function, symbolizing the burial clothes of Christ and his glorious resurrection:

We deem the magistrates' and patricians' wearing of *loroi* on the festal day of the resurrection of Christ our God to be a type of his burial, while their being gilded is for the brilliance of this day, beaming sunlight as from the sun of Christ himself when he rose. And they, both the magistrates and the patricians, we deem to act as types of the apostles, and the worthy emperor to correspond, inasmuch as it is possible, to God.¹¹

The text goes on to describe the other insignia of the emperor, the silk handkerchief

full of earth, called *anexekakia*, and the buskins on his feet, as representing respectively the teaching of Christ to his disciples and his death and resurrection. However arbitrary the symbolic links may seem to us, in *De cerimoniis* the imperial garments are assigned specific aspects of the emperor's role as the image of Christ.

Ceremonial dress also structures the parallels between the earthly and heavenly courts in the visual arts. Depictions of costume differ from actual ceremonial and panegyrics in one critical respect: whereas written sources, whether ceremonial manuals or encomia, tend to stress the analogy between the emperor and God, imperial art tends to avoid such direct comparisons. The emperor and Christ may be functionally equivalent, but art always maintains a distinction between them in formal terms. One may compare this reticence with the boldness of the Byzantinizing mosaic portrait of Roger II crowned by Christ in the Martorana in Palermo, where Christ's lineaments are assimilated to Roger's own features. William Tronzo has contrasted this "self-sufficient" *Christomimesis*, observable within a single image, with the more indirect approach favored in Byzantium proper.¹² In the imperial art of Constantinople, the presentation of Christ's image and the imperial image may approach asymptotically, but they never precisely coincide. To take a particularly close brush between the two as an example: the twin leaves of a tenth-century ivory diptych, now divided between Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC and the Gotha Schlossmuseum, bear crosses in relief, each centering a roundel (Figures 23.1a and 23.1b).¹³ On one side appears the bust of the emperor, on the other, that of Christ. In terms of pose, only the slight turn in the emperor's gesture – a mark of deference – indicates that he is not fully co-equal with Christ, who is perfectly frontal in his pose.

We see a similar juxtaposition of the emperor and Christ on opposite faces of another ivory object connected to court ceremonial. Long known to scholarship as the Scepter of Leo VI, it has recently been identified as a ceremonial comb.¹⁴ The ivory shows the emperor in the company of an archangel and the Virgin Mary, who adds a pearl to his crown.¹⁵ On the reverse side, Christ appears flanked by SS Peter and Paul. The scalloped arches that frame the heads of the figures recall the semi-domes that radiate from the central space of Hagia Sophia or perhaps even the apsidal reception rooms of the Great Palace.¹⁶ One could interpret the space represented as the actual interior of Hagia Sophia, into which the heavenly figures have descended to appear in the company of the emperor, or one could view the space as an evocation of the heavenly architecture (built, of course, on the Byzantine model) into which the emperor has ascended to join the company of Christ and the saints.¹⁷ The ambiguity is doubtless deliberate, for it allows the viewer to read the image two ways, both equally flattering to the imperial dignity.

In both the diptych and the comb, Christ and the emperor are juxtaposed in similar settings on opposite sides of the same ivory. Yet, in both objects, there are more subtle tactics of visual triangulation between earthly and heavenly realms accomplished by means of dress. On the ivory comb in Berlin, the Archangel Gabriel and the emperor wear identical costumes, notably the imperial *loros*. The ceremonial dress of the emperor, shared with the archangels in art, expresses the ruler's ambiguous hierarchical position between heaven and earth – first in rank on earth, but a servant of Christ in heaven.¹⁸ Similarly, the emperor on the ivory diptych leaf in Washington wears the *loros*; Christ on the corresponding leaf in Gotha appears, as



(a)



(b)

Figure 23.1 Ivory diptych with images of a Byzantine emperor, left (a), and Christ within jeweled crosses (b). Tenth century. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC and Schlossmuseum, Gotha, Germany. (a) Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC; (b) Gotha, Schlossmuseum.

usual, in antique dress. Whereas the panegyrists of Manuel I's court could pun daringly on the likeness of his name to Christ's own, imperial art avoided too literal a resemblance, thanks to the retention of the ancient costume of tunic and mantle for Christ. As no one would have worn such clothing in medieval Byzantium, Christ's dress renders him semantically neutral, outside the sartorial hierarchies of the court and the Church.¹⁹ Thus imperial art expresses more obliquely than court panegyric the emperor's quasi-divine status on earth.

If explicit imperial *Christomimesis* was avoided in the visual arts, the emperor's resemblance to the archangels was embraced and elaborated.²⁰ Not only do the emperor and the archangels share the costume of the *loros*, they frequently appear in one another's company. In one of the frontispiece miniatures of the Paris *Homilies of*

St John Chrysostom, for example, the emperor appears flanked by St John Chrysostom and the Archangel Michael.²¹ Although the imperial figure is labeled as Nikephoros III Botaneiates, Ioannis Spatharakis has argued that the image originally represented Michael VII Doukas – and the presence of his angelic namesake would be a logical form of flattery.²² In the miniature, the archangel actually acts in the role of a courtier *vis-à-vis* the emperor, presenting to him the prostrate scribe (the tiny figure next to the imperial footstool) just as a court eunuch would have presented suppliants to the emperor. The emperor is thus, according to his central position in the miniature and his placement on an elaborate footstool, accorded a superior position to that of the flanking saint and angel, who turn in toward him as in a Deesis.²³ The miniatures of the Paris *Homilies* are not alone in placing the emperor a little higher than the angels. By the mid-fourteenth century, the headgear of certain high-ranking courtiers showed an image of the emperor on the front, flanked by an angel on each side.²⁴ On occasion, coins and other images of the emperor even portrayed him winged like an archangel – a natural extension of the idea that he stood among them as a messenger and intermediary between God and mankind.²⁵

The idea of the emperor's elevation above the visible world was also conveyed in ceremonial, such as the public audience known as the *prokypsis*. On such occasions, securely documented in the fourteenth century but possibly practiced earlier, the emperor and his courtiers would assemble on a special platform following the liturgy on great feast-days. The emperor and his attendants would be hidden from public view by curtains while the entourage assembled. Twelve banners – with representations of archangels, holy bishops, warrior saints, and the emperor on horseback – would be carried into position flanking the tribune. These were arranged in pairs, six of each image to a side. When all was ready, the *protovestiarios* would give a signal for the curtains to be lowered, and the emperor would appear in full regalia, flanked by insignia held by his courtiers: a great lighted candle and a sword. The curtains were only dropped as far as the emperor's knees, so that he would appear to levitate on the dais, and the flanking courtiers remained unseen except for their hands holding his insignia. The assembled crowds shouted acclamations, and the curtains were raised again, the banners departed, and everyone moved on to the palace for a state banquet.²⁶ The ceremonial appearance on the tribune seems designed to treat the emperor's person like a vision appearing from on high, and his being cut off at the knees recalls the Byzantine habit of portraying Christ at bust length to emphasize his divinity.²⁷ The twelve banners with images of saints and angels that flank the emperor in pairs further recall the composition known as the Great Deesis, in which Christ is flanked by pairs of saints grouped according to class.²⁸ The ceremonial appearance of the emperor thus models the heavenly hierarchy as pictured in the art of the Church.

With this model in mind, we can return to one of the most famous images of the imperial majesty, the frontispiece portrait of Michael VII Doukas, altered to represent Nikephoros III Botaneiates after the latter's usurpation in 1078, enthroned amid courtiers in the frontispiece to the Paris *Homilies* of St John Chrysostom (Figure 23.2).²⁹ The emperor appears seated on a lyre-backed throne, pictured twice as large as the figures who accompany him. From either side of the back of his throne appear the personified virtues of Truth and Justice, while four courtiers flank his footstool. They appear ranged to the emperor's left and right in accordance with



Figure 23.2 Courtiers and personified virtues surround the throne of Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071–8), altered to represent the usurper Nikephoros III Botaneiates (r. 1078–81), Paris, BnF, ms. Coislin 79, fol. 2. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

their respective offices, given in minute inscriptions above their heads: *protosproedros kai protovestiaros*, *proedros kai epi tou kanikleiou*, *proedros kai dekanos* and *proedros kai megas primikerios*.³⁰ The image is a *locus classicus* in discussions of imperial art precisely because it is so rare: few preserved images show emperors accompanied by actual courtiers, and no other work presents the court in such iconic fashion.³¹ As Annemarie Weyl Carr has pointed out, in the vast majority of depictions the emperor is accompanied by saints or archangels, who substitute for the earthly servants of the court.³² The epigram accompanying the frontispiece image compares the emperor to the sun as bringer of light, and, as Henry Maguire has noted, the courtiers turn inward toward him like heliotropes following the sun.³³ We can compare the composition to the expanded Deesis mosaic partially preserved in the patriarchal rooms of Hagia Sophia, and dated to the late ninth century.³⁴ There we see Christ seated on a lyre-backed throne, flanked by the Virgin and, one presumes, John the Baptist (the figure is almost entirely lost). The ranks of the Deesis are filled out with apostles, sainted bishops and SS Constantine and Helena. We may consider the leaf from the Paris Chrysostom manuscript as a Deesis with the emperor and courtiers substituting for Christ and the heavenly hierarchy, a specifically imperial modification of an ecclesiastical composition. One can compare the manuscript leaf with another commission of Michael VII, the enamels of the Holy Crown of Hungary, which show a conventional Deesis on the front of the crown and an “imperial Deesis,” including King Géza of Hungary in subordinate position, on the back.³⁵ While the crown preserves a place of honor for Christ – he alone is shown enthroned – the parallel positions of the enamels on each side imply a similar role for the emperor. The frontispiece image in the Paris manuscript goes a step further, taking the model of Christ in the midst of the celestial hierarchy as a model for an exceptional image of the imperial glory.

The imperial court, for its part, furnished a model for envisioning the heavenly realm. We have a tenth-century description of Paradise via a near-death experience, narrating the vision of Kosmas the Monk. Kosmas, a monk in Asia Minor, after suffering from a long illness, falls asleep on 3 June 963 and experiences a vision of Paradise.³⁶ In his vision, Kosmas travels through a paradisiacal landscape with a luxuriant garden and olive grove. Beyond these, he encounters a city girded with twelve walls of precious stone and protected by gates of gold and silver. These walls clearly echo the twelvefold foundations, also crafted from a variety of gemstones, that underpin the heavenly city in Revelation.³⁷ Within the walls Kosmas finds streets of gold and golden houses with golden furnishings, but he encounters no mortal inhabitants until he reaches the upper part of the city, where he enters a palace with a marvelous reception hall. This, in contrast to the empty city without, is filled with people: a host of banqueters being waited on by shining eunuchs. The space of the hall, we are told, communicates via a spiral staircase with an equally sumptuous balcony. The text spells out the architectural features of the palace in sufficient detail for us to identify its earthly prototype, the Palace of the Kathisma, that is, the portion of the Great Palace adjoining the hippodrome in Constantinople and the site of imperial banquets and receptions.³⁸ The angelic eunuchs that wait tables in Kosmas’ vision are, of course, heavenly versions of the very real eunuchs who served the equally real banquets in the court of the emperor in Constantinople.

Just as petitioners would approach the emperor at court via the mediation of

courtiers, who spoke on one's behalf, so petitions were presented to Christ through the intercession of the Mother of God and saints. The parallelism with court ceremonial is given visual form in a number of images that show the patron or donor introduced to Christ by the Virgin and saints. In each case, the saint holds the donor by the wrist, echoing the gesture of courtiers who would hold the petitioner at court by the arm.³⁹ In a thirteenth-century Gospel book at Mt Athos, the donor, holding the book like an official gift, is introduced by the Virgin to Christ. The Virgin acts as *logothetes*, holding the donor's petition, for the remission of his sins. On the leaf opposite, St John Chrysostom, standing next to the enthroned Christ, takes the role of *notarios*, recording on a scroll Christ's formal response granting to the donor long life and the pardon of his sins.⁴⁰ The intimate drama of personal salvation is thus given a visual form lifted from the official ceremonial of the Byzantine court. One could multiply the examples, but it is clear that images of the imperial court and the image of the celestial hierarchy drew repeatedly one on the other in ways that reinforced the notion of the court as the image of heaven, and vice versa.

REFLECTIONS OF HEAVEN IN THE CHURCH

The analogy of heavenly and ecclesiastical offices was already established very early in the patristic period and continued to exist alongside the idea of the earthly court as the mirror of the celestial hierarchy. Ignatius of Antioch, writing around the year 100, could already refer to the bishop in the assembly of his priests as the equivalent of Christ in the company of the apostles, long before such a role was applied to the emperor and courtiers by Constantine VII.⁴¹ The paired works of Pseudo-Dionysios, *The Celestial Hierarchies* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchies* illustrate the ideological possibilities of pairing the earthly order with a heavenly counterpart. There are a few traces from the early Byzantine period of the impact of such thinking on the visual arts. We can see its impress most clearly in a handful of works from the Kaper Koraon treasure, a hoard of liturgical silver of the sixth and seventh centuries from northern Syria.⁴² Two vessels from this treasure, the Riha and Stuma patens, show Christ distributing communion to the apostles, not as a participant in the Last Supper, but as officiant at a liturgy.⁴³ Both patens, dated by stamps to late in the reign of Justin II (565–78), show Christ standing at an altar covered with a cloth and holding the Eucharistic vessels. The scene is set within the sanctuary of a church, defined on one paten by the domed canopy of the altar, on the other by a chancel screen. The images thus blur the line between the historical institution of the Eucharist and its continuous, mystical unfolding as the feast at which the ascended Christ presides.⁴⁴ The intrusion of heavenly realities into earthly liturgies is emphasized also by the engraved decoration of silver liturgical fans (*rhypidia*) from the same treasure. These had a practical function, to keep flies from alighting on the Eucharistic elements, but quite early their decoration emphasized a symbolic interpretation. The Riha and Stuma fans bear engraved images of cherubim with four faces – human, leonine, bovine and aquiline – derived ultimately from the throne-chariot vision of Ezekiel.⁴⁵ The images on the fans emphasize first of all the connection between the Christian altar and the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant, the latter overshadowed by image of the cherubim.⁴⁶ Furthermore, they link the office of deacons – among whose functions it was to wield these fans at the altar – to the ministry of the angels.⁴⁷ The

connection was already established in patristic sources: the deacons' liturgical function was to act as intermediaries or messengers (*angeloi*) between the people in the nave and the priests in the sanctuary. Various texts further connect the deacons and the liturgical gestures made with their stoles to the waving of the wings of the angels around the throne of God.⁴⁸ The decoration of the fans waved by the deacons further assimilates their ministry to that of the angels.

These sorts of works of art, which freely draw associations between earthly and heavenly realities, fit awkwardly into the apologetic discourse for the veneration of icons. After all, the iconophile definition (*horos*) achieved at the Second Council of Nicaea (787) stipulated that the icon's validity is based in the reality of the prototype and the artist's more-or-less faithful rendition of that reality in an image.⁴⁹ While we may attribute to Iconoclasm the scarcity of surviving works of art of this type from the early Byzantine period, the further development of this iconography after Iconoclasm was, ironically, suppressed by the very arguments used to maintain the orthodoxy of icon veneration. It is thus only after the crisis of Iconoclasm had receded into historical memory, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, that we see works of art once again beginning to draw explicit parallels between the earthly church and the heavenly realm. The development of iconographic themes linking the realms of the Church and of heaven in a tight parallelism is one of the key innovations of later Byzantine art.

At least one impetus for this development was the visual and rhetorical connection that we have already examined, linking the imperial court and the heavenly kingdom. The sartorial influence of the imperial court on the ecclesiastical hierarchy was also critical in giving visual form to the parallels between the heavenly realm and the Church. Prior to the eleventh century, the system of liturgical vesture in the Byzantine Church distinguished only the order of the wearer, whether he was a bishop, priest or deacon. This meant that, when vested for the celebration of the liturgy, the patriarch of Constantinople would appear in exactly the same garments as the bishop of a minor provincial diocese. Over the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, however, new insignia were introduced at the highest levels of the hierarchy that helped to distinguish prelates not only by order, but by the rank of their see. The transformation is dramatically illustrated in two superimposed layers of fresco at the church of the Holy Anargyroi at Kastoria (Figure 23.3). St Basil is shown in the tenth-century fresco wearing plain vestments, the only ornament being the dark crosses on the broad stole (*omophorion*) that is the sign of his episcopal office. When the image was renewed in the twelfth century, the vestments were brought into line with what, by then, would be fitting for the dignity of Basil's rank as metropolitan of Caesarea. The later fresco shows his outer garment, the *phelonion*, covered with crosses (hence called the *polystaurion*), a privilege restricted to the four Orthodox patriarchs and the metropolitans of Caesarea, Ephesus, Thessalonika and Corinth by the first author to mention the *polystaurion*, John Zonaras.⁵⁰ Eventually the *polystaurion* was itself supplanted as the vestment of highest rank by the *sakkos*, a garment that seems to be modeled on the ceremonial tunic (*sakkos*) of the emperor himself.⁵¹ St Basil's later image also shows him wearing gold-embroidered insignia, the *epimanikia* and *epigonation*, also introduced in this period as the special regalia of bishops and archbishops. These new insignia eventually filtered down to lower ranks of clerics, as is illustrated by the history of the



Figure 23.3 St Basil in the simple vestments of the tenth century (above) and the more elaborate episcopal insignia of the twelfth century (below). Superimposed frescoes in the church of the Holy Anargyroi, Kastoria, Greece. Velissarios Voutsas.

epimanikia, or liturgical cuffs. In the first written notice of the cuffs, an eleventh-century letter of Patriarch Peter of Alexandria to Michael Keroularios, they appear as specifically patriarchal insignia. The canonist Theodore Balsamon, writing in the late twelfth century, describes the *epimanikia* as restricted to bishops; finally, in a thirteenth-century *diataxis*, or book of liturgical rubrics, they are mentioned as worn by priests as well.⁵² The spread of originally exclusive insignia to lower ranks of clergy in turn spurred the creation of still more distinguishing vestments for the highest prelates. The effect of these additions to the repertoire of liturgical vestments was to introduce visible distinctions into the hierarchy of ecclesiastics comparable, in some respects, to the established distinctions among the ranks of courtiers surrounding the emperor. It also allowed for a more complex series of visual cross-references between the earthly Church and the heavenly realm than had previously been possible.

A key to this series of cross-references was the introduction, toward the end of the twelfth century, of embroidered figural imagery on liturgical vestments. While the earliest Greek theology asserted that the bishop or priest ministered *in persona Christi*, it was only at this point that the vestments of the clergy began to make this function of representing Christ concrete through embroideries of his image and scenes from his life. By wearing Christ's image, both in the form of his iconic portrait and as the pictorial synopsis of the Gospels, the clergy assumed the role not just of representatives of Christ, but literally representations of him. Thanks to the widespread popularity of mystagogical interpretations of the liturgy that mapped each action of the celebrant onto an event from the Gospels,⁵³ the sequence of narrative images covering a vestment such as the Major Sakkos of Photios, dating between 1414 and 1417, expressed the wearer's role as the living symbol of Christ (Figure 23.4).⁵⁴

This development was complemented by contemporaneous developments in wall painting. Programs of fresco painting increasingly embraced subject matter that blurred the line between heavenly and earthly liturgies.⁵⁵ From the fourteenth century, depictions of the Communion of the Apostles begin to depict Christ standing at the altar, not in antique dress, but in the distinctive vestments of a Byzantine patriarch. The earliest examples are found at St Nicholas Orphanos in Thessalonika and at St Nikita in Čučer, both dating to the second decade of the fourteenth century.⁵⁶ In both cases, Christ appears vested in the patriarchal *sakkos* and the *omophorion*, and angels dressed as deacons assist him at the altar. We have already seen the connection between angels and deacons exploited in the liturgical fans from the Kaper Koraon treasure. In post-iconoclastic art angel-deacons appear in some of the earliest representations of the Communion of the Apostles, at St Sophia in Kiev and St Sophia in Ohrid, both of the eleventh century.⁵⁷ In the Palaiologan period, the hierarchy of angel-clergy was filled out with angel-priests in addition to angel-deacons. At the Peribleptos church at Mistra, the frescoes depict a Great Entrance procession enacted by angels vested both as priests and as deacons. The angel-priests carry veiled chalices, while the angel-deacons balance veiled patens on their heads as they process toward an altar where Christ himself presides.⁵⁸ The postures, peculiar as they may seem to modern eyes, are precisely those stipulated in late Byzantine *diataxeis*, or books of liturgical directions.⁵⁹ As with the images based on court ceremonial, the heavenly figures act according to earthly ritual norms. Here, the



Figure 23.4 Scenes from the life of Christ, figures of saints and the embroidered text of the Nicene Creed: the “Major Sakkos” of the metropolitan Photios, a Byzantine liturgical vestment of about 1414–17. Kremlin Armory, Moscow.

difference is that the heavenly figures *dress* exactly as do their earthly counterparts. What is more, the action of the celestial liturgy is depicted at monumental scale in the same space in which its earthly model (or, as Byzantine theologians would insist, its earthly copy) takes place.⁶⁰

These images of Christ as bishop and angels as assisting clergy that appear in monumental painting in the final centuries of Byzantium eschew the indirect linkages of earth and heaven favored by imperial imagery to present a vision of the heavenly hierarchy as an exact mirror-image of the earthly Church. Perhaps the most striking example of the interchangeability of the heavenly and ecclesiastical hierarchies in late

Byzantine art is the iconostasis curtain from Chilandar monastery on Mt Athos, embroidered in 1399 (Figure 23.5).⁶¹ On this textile, Christ appears as a patriarch in the short-sleeved vestment – the *sakkos* – and the distinctive crossed broad stole of a bishop, flanked by SS Basil and John Chrysostom, the reputed authors of the Byzantine liturgy. The dress and pose of the flanking saints imitate that of bishops assisting a patriarch at mass. Angels act as deacons, waving liturgical fans behind them. In contrast to painted scenes of the Communion of the Apostles, there is no altar depicted on the textile, which would have hung in the central doors of the icon screen between the nave and sanctuary. When the curtain was drawn aside at the Great Entrance and at the Communion, it would have revealed the human celebrant standing in Christ's place at the altar table.⁶² The veil and its embroidered imagery stress the very thinness of the division between the heavenly hierarchy and that of the Church on earth.

AFTER THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

The system of visual correspondences between the hierarchy and ritual of the earthly Church and that of the Kingdom of Heaven was comprehensive, but it never entirely displaced the system of imperial references. The archangels continue to wear the *loros* in Palaiologan and post-Byzantine painting, often alongside images of angels in liturgical dress. To judge from the textual sources, Palaiologan court ceremonial became more, not less, Christomimetic than that of the middle Byzantine period. We learn from Pseudo-Kodinos, for instance, that the emperor washed the feet of twelve of the poor on Holy Thursday, in imitation of Christ's washing the feet of the disciples.⁶³ In this case, though, the ritual was a borrowing from the ecclesiastical sphere, having long been the practice of bishops and monastic superiors.⁶⁴ While ecclesiastical art and ceremonial continued to take cues from the imperial court and vice versa, it is clear that by the mid-fourteenth century the Byzantine Church had taken the lead in crafting visual assertions of its continuity with the heavenly sphere.

There was a fundamental difference, however, in the structures of the parallel hierarchies of the Church and of the imperial court. The imperial system was strictly pyramidal, with the emperor standing at its peak as the intermediary with the realm of divinity. Ceremonial manuals and lists of precedence carefully ensured that the unique rank of each office at court was expressed in its costume, creating an orderly chain of authority descending from the emperor. Despite the introduction of garments of rank into liturgical dress from the eleventh century on, the ecclesiastical vesture never developed such a degree of differentiation among the ranks of clergy. The ecclesiastical hierarchy claimed universal authority, but it did not vest these claims in a single office. While apologists for the privileges of the patriarchate of Constantinople could claim that the Church has "Christ as its head and the patriarch as his image,"⁶⁵ their claims were counterbalanced by the equal insistence that each bishop fully represents Christ in the liturgy.⁶⁶

Despite this internal tension, the hierarchy articulated by vestments, painting and ceremonial of the late Byzantine Church managed to express its claims to reflect heavenly realities with greater immediacy than ever possible in the imperial sphere. Whereas the emperor and archangels could pass back and forth across the permeable barrier between the court and heaven, their dress and rank changed depending on

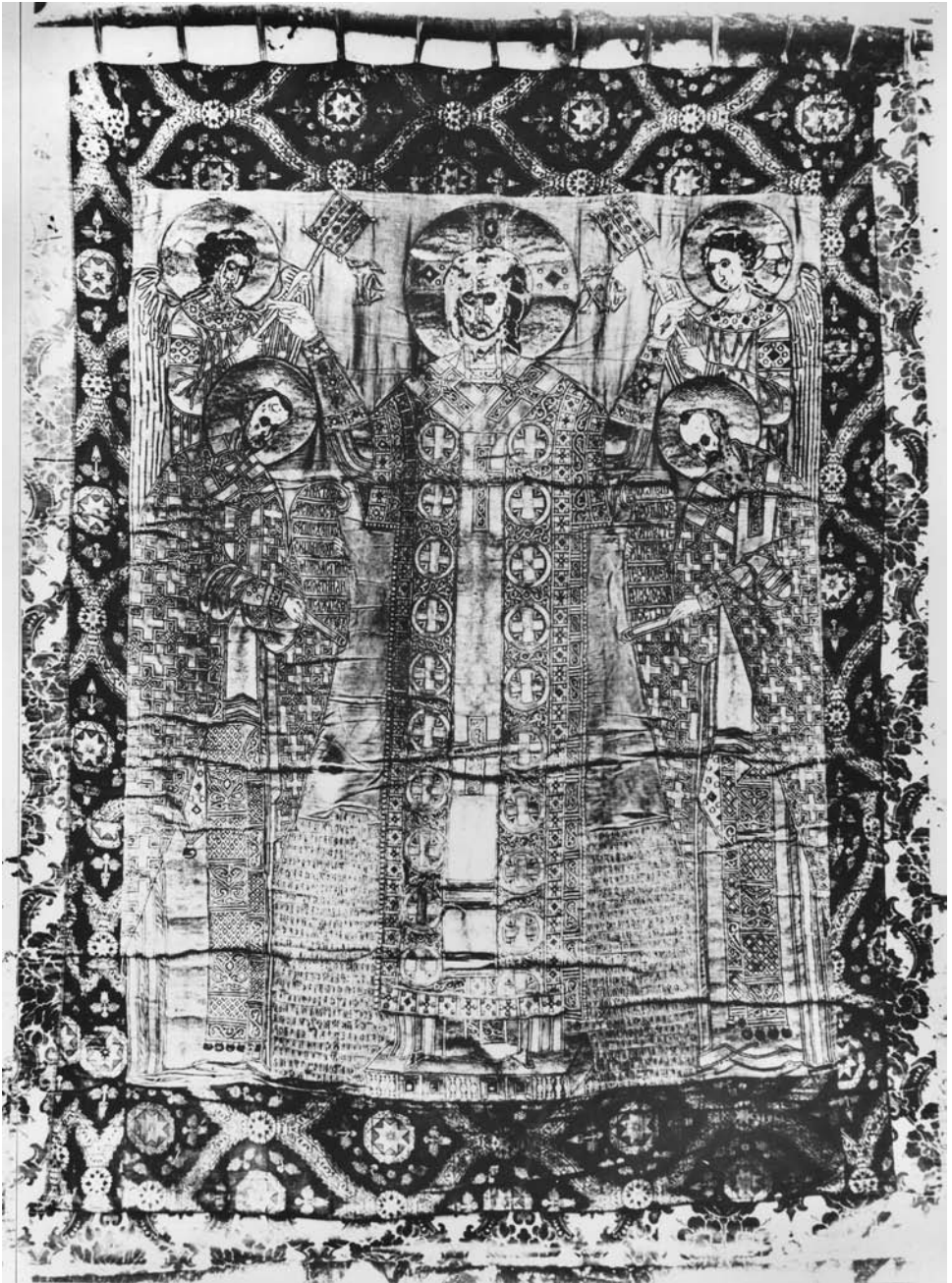


Figure 23.5 Christ vested as a Byzantine patriarch, attended by SS Basil and John Chrysostom and by angels vested as deacons. Iconostasis curtain of 1399, Chilandar monastery, Mt Athos. Dumbarton Oaks Photo and Fieldwork Archive, used by permission of the heirs of Ivan Đjordjević.

which realm they occupied.⁶⁷ The ecclesiastical hierarchy, on the other hand, was able to present itself as a direct mirror of the heavenly one. Distinctions between the two collapsed further as the empire drew toward its own dissolution. There survives a sizeable group of Ottoman textiles from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries that show, in repeated roundels, the image of Christ as High Priest, clad in patriarchal vestments and blessing with both hands (Figure 23.6).⁶⁸ Such fabrics may have already been imported into Constantinople before 1453, as we know to have been the case for Italian textiles.⁶⁹ Their decoration echoes that seen on the *sakko*i worn by Christ in Palaiologan painting, with all-over patterns of crosses and circles. Whereas the earlier, embroidered liturgical vestments create links between the celebrant and Christ by triangulating between the vested clergy, liturgical mystagogy and representations in wall painting, these vestments collapse such distinctions. Neither outside visual cues nor prior knowledge of liturgical mystagogy is necessary to read

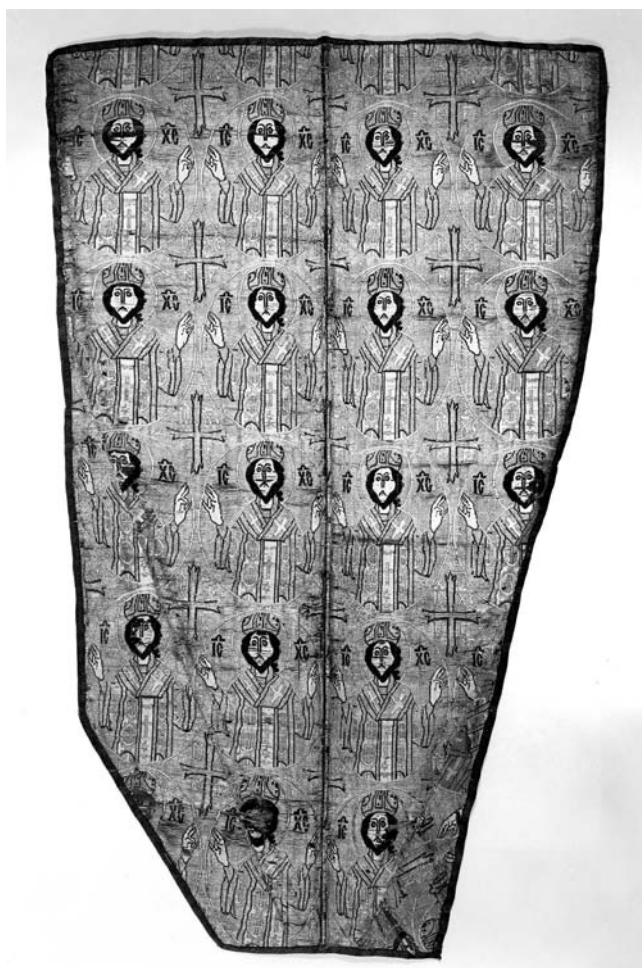


Figure 23.6 Christ vested as a Byzantine patriarch. Ottoman woven silk and metallic-thread twill, sixteenth or seventeenth century. Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection.

such images: they make visible in the plainest possible terms the hidden identity of the clergy with Christ their head.

NOTES

- 1 Pseudo-Dionysios, *Celestial Hierarchies*, III.1, PG 3: 164D; trans. Luiheid 1987: 153–4.
- 2 The name Cosmas Indicopleustes first appears in catenae of the eleventh century; an attribution of the *Christian Topography* to Constantine of Antioch has been suggested: Wolska-Conus 1989: 28–30.
- 3 *Christian Topography* V.20, ed. Wolska-Conus 1968–73, II: 39; cf. Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:5, 9:1–12, 23–4.
- 4 On relevance of the *Christian Topography* to the debate over images, see Brubaker 2006.
- 5 On this topos, see Mango 1980: 151–3.
- 6 The following discussion is based on the fundamental observations of Maguire 1997a.
- 7 Magdalino 1993: 415.
- 8 Magdalino 1993: 437.
- 9 de Lagarde and Bollig 1882: 28–31.
- 10 On the *loros* in imperial images and texts see Parani 2003: 18–24; and Maguire in this volume.
- 11 *De cerimoniis* II.40, ed. Reiske 1829–30: 637–8. My translation.
- 12 Tronzo 1997: 107–9.
- 13 Anthony Cutler dates the pair of leaves to the sole reign of Constantine VII (945–59): Cutler 1994: 220–1.
- 14 Cutler 1994: 200–1; Maguire in Evans and Wixom 1997: 201–2; Bühl and Jehle 2002: 289–306.
- 15 Arnulf 1990: 82–3.
- 16 Corrigan 1978: 413; Arnulf 1990: 82; and Featherstone in this volume.
- 17 Maguire 1997b: 249–50.
- 18 Maguire 1997b: 249.
- 19 For similar observations on the non-imperial character of Christ's costume in early Christian art: Mathews 1993: 101, 178–9.
- 20 Maguire 1997b: 247–51.
- 21 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ms. Coislin 79, fol. 2v.
- 22 Spatharakis 1976: 111–12.
- 23 Dumitrescu 1987: 40–2; Maguire 1997b: 249. Spatharakis echoes Bordier's identification of the prostrate figure as the painter, although the mention of the scribe in the inscription at the top of the leaf makes him the more logical identification. Spatharakis 1976: 112.
- 24 Verpeaux 1966: 152.
- 25 Maguire 1997b: 252–5.
- 26 Verpeaux 1966: 195–204.
- 27 Oration 34 of Leo VI is explicit in describing the half-length image (τῆς κάτω θέσεως τῶν μερῶν ἐλλειπής) of Christ in the dome of the church of Stylianus Zaoutzas, interpreting it as a symbol of Christ's sublimity. Akakios 1868: 275.
- 28 On the iconography of the *deesis*: Walter 1980; Cutler 1987.
- 29 On the Byzantine alterations to the images and their inscriptions, as well as the modern alterations to the foliation: Spatharakis 1976: 107–15.
- 30 Spatharakis 1976: 110.
- 31 But compare the lost image of Manuel I Komnenos in the midst of the virtues: Magdalino and Nelson 1982: 142–6.
- 32 Carr 1997: 84–5.
- 33 Maguire in Evans and Wixom 1997: 209.
- 34 Cormack and Hawkins 1977: 212–31, 235–44, pls 26–47; Grabar 1984: 193–4.
- 35 Maguire 1997b: 247–8; Maguire 1997c: 188; Wessel 1967: 111–15.
- 36 Angelidi 1983b.
- 37 See Revelation 21:15–21.
- 38 Müller-Wiener 1977: 229, 236. See also Featherstone in this volume.
- 39 Ševčenko 1994: 273–5.

- 40 Ševčenko 1994: 274–5; Belting 1970: 35–7, 72.
- 41 Ignatius, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, VIII.1, ed. Camelot 1958: 162.
- 42 M. Mango 1986: 6–8, 20–34.
- 43 M. Mango 1986: 165–70, 171–2.
- 44 M. Mango 1986: 159, 165; Schulz 1986: 103–4. Compare the depiction of the Communion of the Apostles in the late sixth-century Rossano Gospels, fols 3v–4r. Cavallo 1992: 24, pls 6–7.
- 45 M. Mango 1986: no. 32, 150–4. Cf. Ezekiel 1:4–21. On the iconography of cherubim and seraphim: van der Meer 1938: 255–9; Peers 2001: 46–9.
- 46 Exodus 25:17–22, 37:7–9; cf. Hebrews 9:5.
- 47 *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII.12.3–4, cited in M. Mango 1986: 151.
- 48 Pseudo-Chrysostom, *In parabolam de filio prodigo*, PG 59: 520; Germanos, *Historia ecclesiastica*, PG 98: 393C; Pseudo-Sophronios, *Commentarius liturgicus*, PG 87: 3988D; Philotheos, *Ordo sacri ministerii*, PG 154: 753A, 756B–D; Trempelas 1912: 6, 83.
- 49 Tanner 1990: 133–8.
- 50 Papas 1965: 755; Ralles and Potles 1852–9: II, 260. The slightly later canonist Theodore Balsamon attempts to restrict the *polystaurion* to patriarchs exclusively. Braun 1907: 237; Papas 1965: 755; Theodore Balsamon, *Responsa ad Marcum*, PG 138: 989A; idem, *Meditata*, PG 138: 1020C, 1025D, 1028B.
- 51 Papas 1965: 125. On the imperial *sakkos*, see Parani 2003: 23–4; Hendy 1999: 157.
- 52 Michael Keroularios, *Epistolae*, PG 120: 800C; Theodore Balsamon, *Responsa ad interrogationes Marci*, PG 138: 988D; Trempelas 1912: 1a. On the privileged use of the *epigonation* by priests of rank, see Symeon of Thessalonika, *De sacra liturgia*, PG 155: 261D–264A.
- 53 Schulz 1986; Bornert 1966.
- 54 Mayasova 1991: 44–50.
- 55 On the theme of the celestial liturgy: Walter 1982: 217–21.
- 56 Walter 1982: 216.
- 57 Lazarev 1960: pls 33, 34; Hamann-MacLean and Hallensleben 1963: II, 224–5, pl. VI.
- 58 Dufrenne 1970: 14, fig. 62.
- 59 Taft 1975: 206–7; Trempelas 1912: 9.
- 60 See Symeon of Thessalonika, *Contra haereses*, PG 155: 340.
- 61 Millet 1939–47: 76–8, pl. CLIX.
- 62 On the curtain in the sanctuary entrance: Taft 1975: 411–16.
- 63 Verpeaux 1966: 228–9.
- 64 Tronzo 1994: 61–2.
- 65 Nikopoulos 1981–2: 461.
- 66 Symeon of Thessalonika, *Expositio de divino templo*, PG 155: 709A.
- 67 Maguire 1997b: 256–7.
- 68 Atasoy *et al.* 2001: 176–81, 241, 244.
- 69 Lowry 2003: 40–2, 63–4.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

UNOFFICIAL ART AND THE RESISTANCE TO ORTHODOXY



Henry Maguire

ORDER AND DISORDER IN BYZANTINE ART

The Byzantines were obsessed with *taxis*, or order: in the Church order was the expression of proper belief, in the state it demonstrated proper government.¹ The outer manifestation of order in the Church was its liturgy, the controlled sequence of actions and words performed at the appropriate times of day and year.² In the state its principal expression was the ceremony of the imperial court, elaborately staged rituals which in many ways echoed those of the Church.³ Byzantine official art, also, was controlled by strict conventions. Religious art was almost entirely restricted to two-dimensional or low-relief forms. There was very little church sculpture that was created fully in the round. Christian iconography, also, kept within well-defined boundaries. There were established portrait types for Christ and the major saints, which regulated the physiognomies of their portraits and the details of their clothing.⁴ A series of such portraits appears in Figure 24.1, a “Menologion” icon of around 1200 from the collection at Mt Sinai.⁵ It is one of a series of twelve such panels, one for each month, which portray the saints in orderly rows corresponding to the sequence in which they were celebrated during the church year. Each saint has his particular characteristics of facial features and hair, and the costume appropriate to his or her rank or station in life, whether monk, nun, deacon, bishop, soldier, doctor or office-holder at court.

The most important narrative scenes, especially those from the New Testament, followed standard compositional schemes, which allowed for little variation on the part of individual artists.⁶ Each Nativity scene, for example, was made up of conventional components, which included the child lying in his stone manger in a cave at the center of the image, the Virgin sitting or reclining beside the crib, the midwives giving the child his first bath in a chalice-shaped basin at the bottom of the composition, St Joseph sitting in a hunched position at the bottom left or the bottom right of the frame, the star at the top shining its ray of light on the infant, and a group of shepherds, differentiated according to age, below. These elements made up the standard iconography of Christ’s Nativity from the ninth century onwards.⁷

Although there were some exceptions, the general rule in religious iconography

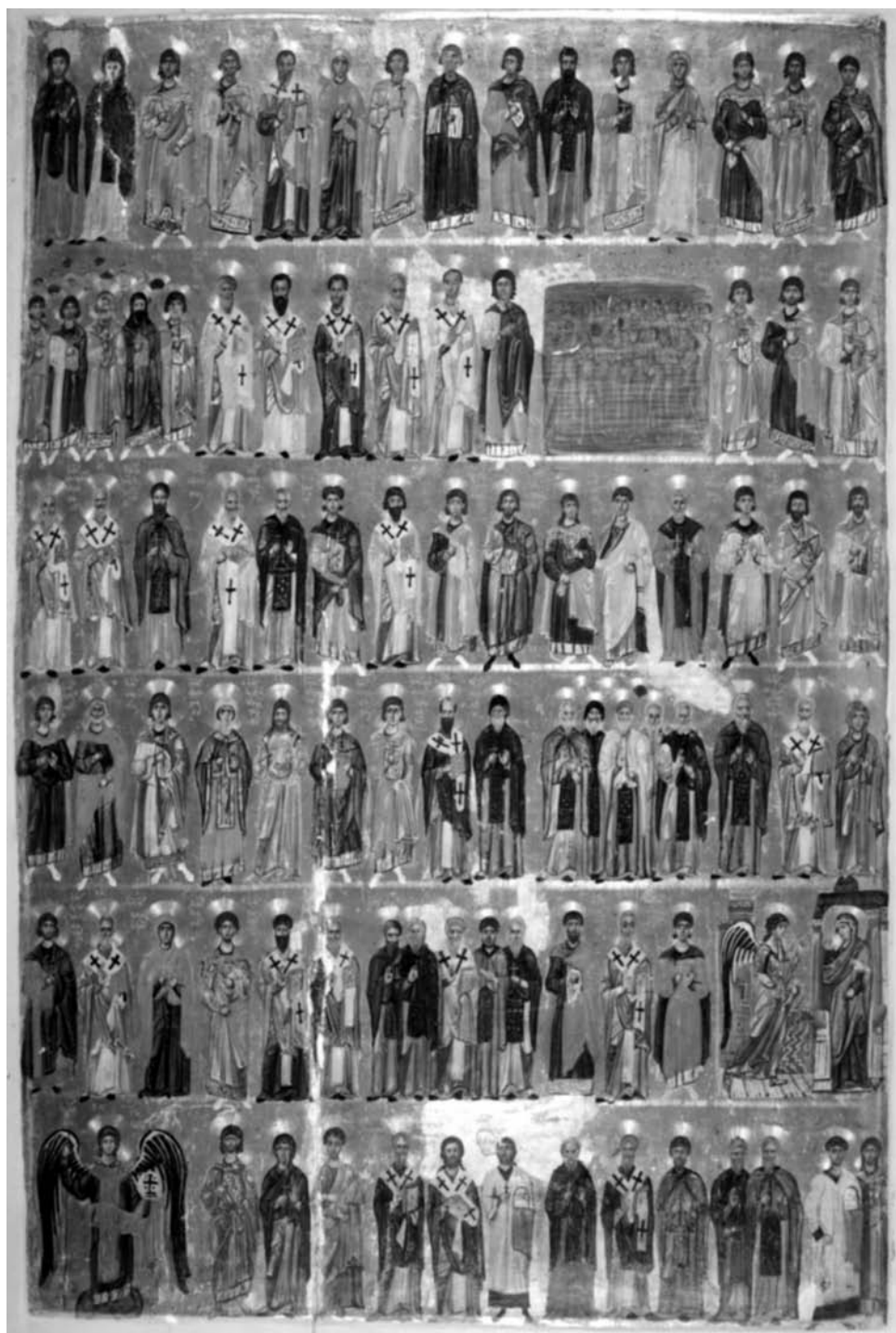


Figure 24.1 Menologion icon for March. Painted panel, Monastery of St Catherine, Mt Sinai. Reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mt Sinai.

was a remarkable uniformity, especially when Byzantine art is compared with medieval art in the West. In western Europe there was much less standardization of the portrait types of the saints, and much less conformity to standard models in the depiction of biblical scenes. The relative freedom enjoyed by western artists enabled them to manipulate biblical iconography in novel ways, in order to express typological, metaphorical or theological ideas. But Byzantine church artists, who officially were supposed to shun novelty, were not encouraged to engage in such experimentation. The Byzantine image was fixed and “true”; it was not subject to alteration on an individual’s whim.

Byzantine imperial art, also, was controlled by established conventions. The emperor, for example, was never portrayed from the back, or in profile, for such views would have been an affront to his imperial dignity. Furthermore, like the saints, the emperor was frequently given a halo, through which he was likened rhetorically to the sun.⁸ In addition to his crown,⁹ the emperor’s rank was usually conveyed in art by the attribute of the *loros*, a long jeweled band decorated with precious stones. Although it seems that in real life the emperors donned this garment only on the most important of occasions, as it was cumbersome and heavy, in art it served as a conventional symbol of imperial status.¹⁰ The unchanging nature of imperial art is well illustrated by works such as the eleventh-century mosaic in the gallery of St Sophia in Constantinople, which originally showed the empress Zoe accompanied by her first husband, the emperor Romanos III. After the death of Romanos, and the second marriage of Zoe, the mosaic was altered to show the empress together with her third husband, Constantine IX. In order to effect the change, the mosaicists had only to replace the face of the new emperor; the rest of his image, that is, the imperial costume with the *loros*, they left in place, for this was the unchanging costume of all emperors, no matter which individual was holding office at the time.¹¹

Alongside the well-ordered world of liturgical ceremony and sanctioned art, there was another world, one that existed outside the constraints of official ideology and conventions. This was the unofficial world, of novelty, innovation and lack of control. Like the official world, the unofficial world had its own art and its own performances. The unofficial performances took the form of parodies of the liturgy, in which both lay people and clerics took part, and acts by professional mimes and street entertainers.¹² The performances of the Byzantine mimes are now lost to us, except for a few disparaging references in the writings of Byzantine churchmen and historians, and one or two fleeting depictions in wall paintings and manuscript illuminations.¹³ However, the visual art that belonged to the unofficial world, and that was one of its principal expressions, has survived and can be appreciated today.¹⁴ In this chapter we will look at four of the main characteristics of the unofficial art of the Byzantines, namely innovation, nudity, sexuality and abandon. These characteristics, which might be called “profane,” expressed a disorder that was completely contrary to the ideals of decorum upheld by the Byzantine Church and state.

INNOVATION

One of the guiding principles of Orthodox church art was that artists did not invent. In theory, at least, each icon was an accurate reproduction of its prototype – that is,

the original portrait that had been taken from life, either manually or miraculously.¹⁵ In some instances the portrait had been made by an artist painting a sitter, as was believed to have been the case with the icon of the Virgin Mary known as the *Hodegetria*, which was painted by St Luke.¹⁶ In other instances a miracle produced the likeness, as in the case of the *Mandylion*, a towel which supposedly had been impressed with the features of Christ when it came into contact with his face, and which was rediscovered in the sixth century.¹⁷ Later copies of such works had to reproduce them exactly, for any deviation would render the icon inaccurate and thus break the chain that linked it to its prototype. Likewise, in the case of narrative scenes illustrating the episodes of the Bible, each one was supposed to accurately portray the settings and the figures as they had been when the event took place. An artist who introduced changes was guilty of falsifying sacred history. Of course, over the course of time the portraits and the narrative scenes did change; there was an inevitable drift and even some periods of limited experimentation. But, if an artist strayed too far from the prescribed limits, the church authorities were quick to correct the error. We have, for example, a letter written by Theodore the Studite, which reproves its addressee for commissioning a representation of the crucified Christ as an angel with wings. Such a composition, said Theodore, should be considered “foreign and alien to the tradition of the church . . . seeing that in all the years that have passed no examples of this peculiar subject have ever been given by any of the many holy fathers who were inspired by God.”¹⁸

After the conquest of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204, the Byzantines encountered a new wave of religious art from the West. This exposure made the Orthodox Church all the more anxious to preserve the integrity of its own traditions, a concern that was expressed in the anti-Latin diatribes composed in the thirteenth century, which attacked the Latins for heretical forms and iconography in their art.¹⁹ In general, it is true to say that from the end of Iconoclasm in the ninth century to the final fall of Byzantium in the fifteenth, there was a remarkable consistency in religious art which demonstrates the force of the discipline exerted by the Church.

It is against this background that we should view our first example of Byzantine unofficial art, a twelfth- or early thirteenth-century pottery bowl, which was discovered at Thebes, in Greece (Figure 24.2). It is executed in the *champlevé* technique.²⁰ To make such a vessel, the potter first throws the bowl, then covers it with a thin slip of cream-colored clay. When the slip has hardened sufficiently, the potter cuts the slip away to reveal the red ground of the vessel, leaving behind only those portions of the slip that will form the image (in this case, four heads). The details, such as the eyes and hair, are incised into the remaining slip.²¹ The nature of the technique is such as to encourage swiftness of execution, for the slip dries out relatively quickly, and becomes difficult to work. Also, since each line is cut into the damp clay, which is sticky and viscous, the process encourages the potter to work in broad strokes rather than to attempt a composition based on precise drawing and fine lines. In this respect, the work of the potter differs from that of the painter of a panel, who can easily delineate in detail the accurate features of each saint, as can be seen in the case of the calendar icon from Mt Sinai illustrated in Figure 24.1.

The composition of the bowl strikingly reflects its mode of production, for the images are roughly drawn and have an immediate quality, very different from the studied accuracy of a religious icon. The vessel is divided by lines into four quadrants,



Figure 24.2 Spinning heads. Ceramic bowl found in Thebes, Collection of the First Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, Athens. After Papanikola-Bakirtzis 1999: no. 51.

each containing a disembodied head in profile. At first sight this imagery is puzzling, and seems to defy rational explanation. However, one way to interpret the design is to see it as a kind of parody, or humorous inversion of religious art. If we compare the heads again with the calendar icon from Mt Sinai in Figure 24.1, we see that they break all of the rules of Byzantine church art. Not only are the heads roughly drawn and not differentiated according to canonical portrait types, but each one of them is in profile, whereas religious icons were required to be frontal or in three-quarter view, so that both eyes would be visible. Most importantly, instead of being lined up in an orderly row, the heads on the bowl are completely lacking in stability. Whichever way round the bowl is placed, three of the heads will always be in disorder, either on their sides or upside down. It is this disturbance of the iconic image that gives the pot its humor. We know that the Byzantines enjoyed making fun of the forms and rituals of their own Church. A Byzantine canonist, Theodore Balsamon, complained in the twelfth century that the mimes liked to “wear every kind of stage mask, and freely mock the monks and clergy.” Furthermore, he said: “certain clerics on certain festivals

disguise themselves with various masks. With sword in hand and wearing military costumes, they enter the middle aisle of the church, and then they come out [dressed] as monks, or even as four-legged animals.”²² The heads on the bowl are evocative of the masks worn at such carnivals; they imply a temporary disruption of the regimentation imposed by the Church, an irreverent humor that evidently was enjoyed not only by lay people but even the clergy themselves.

NUDITY

In the Byzantine empire, the mocking of church rituals could be found at the highest levels of society, even in the court of the emperor himself. A good example of this phenomenon is a story told in the tenth-century biography of Basil I, who reigned from 867 until 886. This tale was intended to blacken the character of Basil’s predecessor, Michael III, whom Basil eventually supplanted by having him killed. Basil’s biographer portrays Michael as a unworthy ruler who deserved to die, among other reasons because he was a drunkard who staged blasphemous parodies in the palace in collaboration with his sidekick, a disreputable individual called Groullos, which was a name given to clownlike performers. On one occasion, Basil dressed the bearded Groullos in patriarchal vestments and had the jester sit on the great throne in the *Chrysotriklinos*, the imperial throne room. Basil then summoned his own mother, the saintly Theodora, who had restored the worship of icons to Byzantium, telling her that she was about to receive the patriarch’s blessing. Theodora entered the *Chrysotriklinos*, and fell at the feet of the supposed patriarch, entreating him to say a prayer on her behalf. In response, Groullos rose from his throne and, in the words of the text, “turned his rear toward her” and “emitted a donkey-like noise from his foul entrails.” The emperor, who appropriated for himself the title of “bishop of Colonville,” enjoyed this joke enormously.²³

The scatological humor that is described in this story also appears in some Byzantine works of art, which portray performers thrusting out their behinds in the manner of Groullos. These characters can be found both on ivory and bone carvings, produced for the higher levels of society, and on ceramics, enjoyed by those lower down on the social scale. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York owns a tenth- or eleventh-century casket decorated with bone plaques portraying a variety of figures, including the old man illustrated in Figure 24.3.²⁴ This individual, with his bottom bared and protruding, can be related to a number of other similar figures on Byzantine bone and ivory boxes and ceramics, such as the half-naked dancer at the left end of the box, now in St Petersburg, illustrated in Figure 24.6.²⁵ The type can be traced back to the *cinaedi* of the Roman world, whose antics were illustrated in floor mosaics, wall paintings and pottery lamps.²⁶ To judge from these depictions, the *cinaedi* performed naked, or nearly naked, and, like the old man on the casket, were frequently pot-bellied. Their performances involved much lewd posturing, with their bare behinds pushed out. Frequently they carried sticks, like the character on the Byzantine box in the Metropolitan Museum, with which they engaged in mock fights. Such fights with sticks were described, again with disapproval, by another twelfth-century church canonist, Zonaras, when he complained that the Byzantine mimes of his own day “incite unseemly laughter with blows to the temple and loud noises.”²⁷



Figure 24.3 Naked performer brandishing a stick. Detail of a bone casket, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.237). Photograph, all rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In Byzantine popular art, nudity could be a means of deriding the heroic stereotypes of secular culture. For example, another twelfth-century pottery bowl excavated at Thebes depicts a warrior slaying a large serpent with his sword (Figure 24.4).²⁸ Snake- and dragon-slayers frequently appear on Byzantine pottery.²⁹ Often they can be identified with the legendary hero Digenes Akritas, whose deeds were recorded in oral poetry and in an epic verse romance probably composed in the twelfth century. On a twelfth- or early thirteenth-century ceramic bowl found in the Agora at Athens, a warrior appears beside a crested dragon which he has just killed with five arrows shot through the neck, a deed that is recorded in an Akritic ballad.³⁰ But on this and on other ceramics depicting dragon-slayers, the hero is attired in full armor, appropriate for his dangerous exploits.³¹ On the plate from Thebes, however, the hero is plainly naked. By this means, the artist probably intended to make fun of the legend. The Byzantines did not inherit the ancient Greek concept of the heroic nude; for them, nudity in secular contexts was shameful or ludicrous.³² Naked, or semi-naked, warriors also frequently disport themselves on the eleventh- and twelfth-century ivory and bone caskets, including the one in the Metropolitan Museum.³³ Here, again, the nudity was a site of derision. Some of the naked warriors on the boxes are pot-bellied, and thus far from the ancient Greek ideals of male beauty.³⁴

SEXUALITY

In the epic of Digenes Akritas, the serpent or dragon becomes a symbol of sexual lust. At one point in the poem, a handsome youth appears, who tries to seduce the wife of the hero. On being rebuffed, the youth turns into a fearsome dragon, which Digenes has to destroy.³⁵ This episode follows immediately on another, in which Digenes Akritas himself is the perpetrator of a sexual assault on a girl. Thus the slaying of the



Figure 24.4 A naked hero fights against his dragon. Ceramic bowl found at Thebes, Collection of the First Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, Athens. After Papanikola-Bakirtzis 1999: no. 50.

dragon can be seen as an effort by Digenes to purge himself from his own sexual misdeed. Accordingly, the dragon in the poem represents supernatural evil that drives the lust of both the youth who attempted to seduce Digenes' wife and of the hero himself.³⁶ With the poem in mind, we can see that the meaning of the bowl from Thebes goes beyond the simple humor of an epic hero in the buff; there is also a subsidiary theme of the hero's struggle against sexual desire, which is suggested both by his nakedness and by the phallic nature of his sword. It can also be noted that the facial features of the dragon-slayer in the bowl are remarkably similar to those of the serpent. As the two opponents stare at each other, eyeball-to-eyeball, they ape each other's physiognomies. The features of the beast become human and the man's features become bestial. Thus, as in the epic, the man has acquired some of the characteristics of the beast that he is trying to destroy.

The object held in the man's upraised hand is also ambivalent. The hero apparently clasps it by a handle at the bottom. This fact, and its small size, suggest that it may be a mirror rather than a shield. If so, it could refer to the mirror that Perseus used when he killed the monster Medusa – had Perseus looked at her directly he

would have been turned into stone. But it is also possible that the mirror reflects the warrior rather than the monster – or, rather, that the man looks into the mirror and sees his own vices as the monster that he must slay.

A similar idea, that a man's appetites and passions are wild beasts that he has to kill or to subdue, can be found in earlier Byzantine literature.³⁷ In the seventh century, the poet George of Pisidia described the transforming power of evil passions in a manner strikingly similar to the imagery on the bowl from Thebes: "anyone who mixes the bestial perversions of the passions with a rational nature destroys his own form, and thus contaminated belongs to beasthood instead of reason."³⁸ The correct path, according to George of Pisidia, is to turn to the "monster of the passions," slay it and thus save "the holy virgin of the heart."³⁹

Another twelfth-century champlevé bowl, which was found at Corinth, portrays the theme of carnal love in a more explicit way (Figure 24.5).⁴⁰ It shows a woman



Figure 24.5 Digenes Akritas and Queen Maximo. Ceramic bowl found at Corinth, Archaeological Museum, Corinth. Hirmer Verlag Munich.

with a crown, evidently a queen, sitting on the lap of a man with long hair, whose ringlets cascade over his shoulder. The couple conduct their dalliance in a gardenlike setting, with leafy plants in the foreground, and a rabbit or hare running beside them. The latter animal may be a symbol of lust, for in the tenth-century dream book by the Byzantine writer known as Achmet, hares were associated with sexual activity.⁴¹ The couple on the bowl are sometimes identified as Digenes Akritas and his lover, Maximo, the Amazon queen.⁴² While the identification is not certain, it is a likely supposition on account of the woman's crown.

Whoever the lovers are, their portrayal is clearly intended to be humorous. Here again, as in the case of the bowl with the four disembodied heads, the incongruity of the composition is increased by its systematic reversal of a very common religious image that was familiar to every Byzantine, namely the icon of the Virgin Mary holding the Christ child. From the ninth century onwards, for example, such an image could be seen depicted in mosaic in the apse of the great church of St Sophia in Constantinople.⁴³ We can read the scene in the bowl as a series of inversions of the sacred model: the sitting person is a man instead of a woman; on his lap we see a grown woman instead of a male child; the hair of the seated figure is not modestly concealed by a veil, as is that of the Virgin, but instead it flows down in a luxuriant stream; the feet are not supported in a dignified manner on a footstool, as are the feet of the Mother of God, but instead they project at all angles beyond the frame, in a disorderly and inappropriate fashion. In the context of the norms of Byzantine visual culture, the image on the pot substitutes the profane for the sacred, and converts maternal into erotic love. Thus the vessel was irreverent on several levels. It was a humorous evocation of the dalliances of the greatest hero of Byzantine secular epic, but, at the same time, it implicitly parodied the much more august canons of Byzantine church art.

ABANDON

We have seen that the regular liturgies of Church and palace were, for the Byzantines, preeminent expressions of the principle of order. But we have also seen a desire to subvert those same rituals through parody and disruption. One theme that occurs frequently in the parodies, and in their condemnation by the authorities, is that of inappropriate, unbridled movement, which was often compared to the dancing of the pagan god Dionysos and his followers. By way of example, we may look at another passage in the biography of Basil I, which records how the jester Groullos mocked an ecclesiastical liturgy. The author claims that the patriarch of Constantinople, the pious Ignatios, was conducting a procession of ecclesiastics to a church somewhere outside the city. As the clerics were proceeding with the appropriate chanting, they encountered Groullos accompanied by his cronies, who had dressed themselves up in ecclesiastical garments and were carrying musical instruments. Groullos himself was riding on an ass. When Groullos and his buffoons met the patriarch and his retinue, they started to strum on their stringed instruments, to strike their cymbals and to break into obscene songs in competition with the chanting of the genuine clergy. They also mocked the real priests by lifting up the bogus church vestments which they were wearing. The author of Basil's biography explicitly compares Groullos and his band to a Dionysiac troupe, saying that

they were “leaping about like Pan and the satyrs as they accomplished their diabolical procession and dance.”⁴⁴ The animal on which Groullos was riding also made a reference to the procession of Dionysos and his followers, for the satyr Silenos traditionally rode on an ass.

The mocking antics of Groullos and his band evidently bore some resemblances to performances by the mimes. In the twelfth century, Zonaras, echoing a common theme, complained that the mimes “incite their more simple-minded and heedless [spectators] to bacchic frenzy.”⁴⁵

The theme of derisory leaping and jumping recurs in another tale of the disruption of church services, which is told in the life of Leo, the saintly bishop of Catania, a text that was in circulation by the tenth century. Here it was a pagan sorcerer, named Heliodoros, who tried to subvert the liturgy performed by the saint on a feast-day. During the service, Heliodoros began to leap about in a disorderly manner, jumping on members of the congregation, and imitating the kicking of mules. The people laughed at his antics, but also were distressed at the disruption of the service.⁴⁶

These mockeries of ecclesiastical liturgies were not purely literary inventions. We have seen that the canonist Balsamon complained of clerics who dressed themselves up in inappropriate costumes and entered the church on feast-days. The eleventh-century historian Skylitzes also complained of “the still prevailing custom, on the magnificent and public feast days, of insulting God and the memorials of the saints through improper dances, laughter, and frenzied cries during the celebration of the morning office, which one should offer to God with grief and a contrite heart.”⁴⁷ Here, again, the author stresses inappropriate movement as fundamental to the mockery of the measured conduct of the liturgy.

All of the texts that have been cited here convey a common idea, a desire to break the bounds of decorum, especially by indulging in abandoned movement. They help to explain the great popularity of Byzantine ivory and bone carvings that appear to celebrate freedom of movement as their main theme. A box in the Hermitage Museum illustrates this phenomenon well (Figure 24.6).⁴⁸ It portrays on its front a series of scantily clad figures that are linked only by the variety of poses that they adopt – from the stick-dancer at the far left, who stands on one leg while waving the other one in the air, to the dancer at the far right, who executes a pirouette. These cavorting figures, in their abandoned motion and their nudity, are the complete antithesis of the severely regimented saints on the calendar icon at Mt Sinai (Figure 24.1). The Byzantines must have appreciated such carvings all the more for the comic relief that they provided from the severity of their official art. The art embodied in the dancing figures on the boxes was, of course, anathema to the Church. Commenting on the fifty-first canon of the Council in Trullo, Zonaras wrote: “Correct Christian discipline requires the faithful not to indulge in loose and dissolute living, but to live in a manner that befits the saints. Therefore, this canon forbade whatever gives unnecessary merriment to the soul or weakens and enfeebls its [moral] fibers, and whatever causes shaking with laughter and loud guffaws.”⁴⁹

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have focused on Byzantine art in a variety of media, especially ivory and bone boxes and ceramics. Although the art that has been discussed here

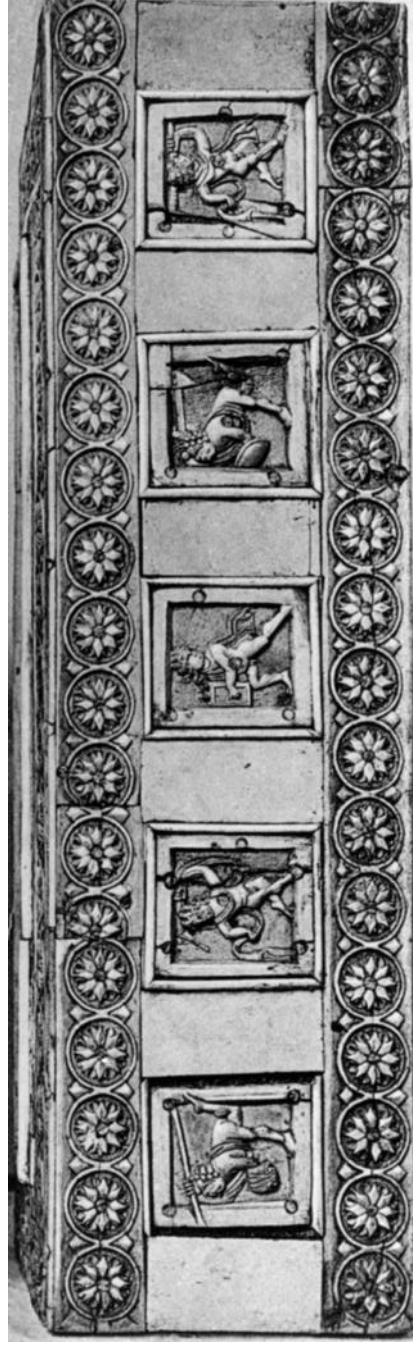


Figure 24.6 Cavorting warriors and performers. Casket, Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. After Goldschmidt and Weitzmann 1930: I, pl. 32.

reflects a culture outside the official orthodoxies of Church and state, it cannot be called “popular” – at least, not in the sense that it excluded the elites. Even if the pottery was cheap, the ivory and bone boxes were relatively expensive products. And we have seen that parodies of ecclesiastical ceremonies were staged in the palace, at least in a biographer’s imagination, and on certain festivals were even performed in churches by the clerics themselves. Just as the restraints of Orthodoxy held all Byzantines of all classes in a tight grip, so did Byzantines of every station have a need for some relief in humor and parody.

In these pages a special emphasis has been placed on pottery, which was an art form produced largely outside the control of Church and state. Although some Byzantine pottery did emulate more costly wares in silver, and thus imitated the forms and iconographies associated with the elite,⁵⁰ many Byzantine ceramic artists produced designs that were completely individual, and innovative in every sense. These strikingly original works have yet to receive their due in the overall assessment of Byzantine art. Traditionally, the art of Byzantium has been associated with the Church, and especially with its greatest creation, the religious icon. Thus, the existence of the unofficial Byzantine art that has been introduced in this chapter, an art unfettered by the constraints of Orthodoxy, has tended to be overlooked. Its inventiveness, physicality and earthy humor do not fit well with the currently preferred view of Byzantine art as a supremely spiritual expression of religious feeling. But the unofficial art existed, nonetheless, and it helps us to see the Byzantines not only painted in two dimensions, like the icons that they revered, but also brought to life in a more rounded fashion as human beings.

NOTES

- 1 Maguire 1997c.
- 2 Dix 1945; Schulz 1986.
- 3 Cameron 1987.
- 4 Dagron 1991; Maguire 1996; Dagron 2007.
- 5 Mouriki 1990: 108, pl. 30.
- 6 Millet 1960.
- 7 Millet 1960: 93–169.
- 8 Maguire 1997c: 189.
- 9 On imperial crowns, see Parani 2003: 27–30.
- 10 On the *loros*, see Parani 2003: 18–27. See also Woodfin in this volume.
- 11 Kalavrezou 1994.
- 12 Tinnefeld 1974.
- 13 See, especially, the frescoes in the north-west tower of St Sophia in Kiev: Logvin 1971: 38–40, pls 251–6.
- 14 Maguire and Maguire 2007.
- 15 Maguire 1996: 5–15.
- 16 Vassilaki 2000: 390–1.
- 17 Wolf *et al.* 2004.
- 18 PG 99: 957; translation by Mango 1972: 175.
- 19 Kolbaba 2000: 51.
- 20 Papanikola-Bakirtzis 1999: 59.
- 21 Papanikola-Bakirtzis 1999: 17–20.
- 22 PG 137: 728–9; Tinnefeld 1974: 339–40.
- 23 Theophanes Continuatus 1838: 244–7.
- 24 Evans and Wixom 1997: 232–3.

- 25 Maguire and Maguire 2007: 113–15, 148, figs 106–8, 136.
- 26 Dunbabin 2004; Maguire and Maguire 2007: 109–10, figs 100–3.
- 27 PG 137: 693. On Byzantine boxes and the mimes, see Cutler 1984–5.
- 28 Papanikola-Bakirtzis 1999: 58.
- 29 Papanikola-Bakirtzis 1999: 40, 177, 182; Maguire and Maguire 2007: 75–81, figs 72–5.
- 30 Frantz 1940–1: 87–91, fig. 1; Frantz 1941: 9–13, fig. 1.
- 31 See, for other fully dressed and armed dragon-slayers, Papanikola-Bakirtzis 1999: 40, 177, 182; Maguire and Maguire 1999: figs 73–5.
- 32 Maguire and Maguire 2007: 106–34.
- 33 See e.g. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann 1930: vol. 1, figs 6c, 20a, 20c, 27b, 28c, 29b, 30c, 30d, 32b, 32c and 32d; Weitzmann 1972: fig. 29c.
- 34 Goldschmidt and Weitzmann 1930: vol. 1, fig. 6c; Weitzmann 1972: fig. 29c.
- 35 Jeffreys 1998: 154–7.
- 36 Jeffreys 1998: 148–51. I am indebted to Christopher Livanos for the interpretation of these passages, and especially to his paper “Digenes and the Dragon: Indo-European Comparisons,” delivered at Dumbarton Oaks in the colloquium on “Byzantine Literature: New Voices and Current Approaches,” 10 November 2007.
- 37 Magdalino 1988: 106–7.
- 38 Trilling 1989: 64.
- 39 Trilling 1989: 65.
- 40 Evans and Wixom 1997: 270–1; Papanikola-Bakirtzis 1999: 184.
- 41 Drexler 1925: 172; Oberhelman 1991: 198.
- 42 Notopoulos 1964: 130–1.
- 43 Mango and Hawkins 1965: figs 1–2.
- 44 Theophanes Continuatus 1838: 245–6.
- 45 PG 137: 693.
- 46 Latyshev 1914: 25.
- 47 Skylitzes 1973: 243–4.
- 48 Goldschmidt and Weitzmann 1930: vol. 1, 42–3.
- 49 PG 137: 693.
- 50 Maguire and Maguire 1992: 14–16; Ballian and Drandaki 2003: 56–7; Maguire and Maguire 2007: 49–53.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MEDIEVAL URBAN IDENTITY



Robert Ousterhout

INTRODUCTION

In his novel, *Plowing the Dark*, published in 2000, the writer Richard Powers summons the image of Justinian's great church, Hagia Sophia, to represent the fabled city of Constantinople and its cultural legacy, inspired by Yeats' poem, "Sailing to Byzantium."¹ In doing so, he adheres to a long-established literary tradition. Following the example of classical rhetoric, Byzantine writers often included descriptions of well-known buildings in their texts.² Focusing on significant details, the *ekphrasis* of a monument was meant to evoke a visual image in the mind of the reader; more importantly, it could symbolize an abstract idea to reinforce the main theme of the text. Properly read, the literary evocation of a monument could represent imperial authority, piety or even urban identity. It is not surprising that the *ekphrasis* was a favorite literary motif of the writers of Byzantine Constantinople, a city filled with a rich repertory of historical monuments, with which their readers would have been familiar. Nor is it surprising that these evocative architectural descriptions have inspired a wealth of imaginative secondary literature, Yeats' poem included.

Similarly, the view of Constantinople in current scholarship has been based on texts; the city is today more the realm of the philologist rather than of the archaeologist. We have learned much about the city from scholars such as Cyril Mango, Gilbert Dagron, Paul Magdalino and others, but their important studies construct Constantinople as a city of words, and their books appear almost entirely without illustrations.³ Unlike other ancient capitals, modern Istanbul has witnessed virtually no urban archaeology, and basic elements of the Byzantine city, such as the street system, public spaces and housing, remain all but unknown.⁴ When new evidence enters the picture, it usually raises more questions than it answers. As a case in point, the much discussed salvage excavation at the Theodosian Harbor, ongoing since 2005, emphasizes how much we do not know about the history of the city.⁵ Both the initial construction and the longevity of the harbor must now be reconsidered.⁶ The picture is similar as we move away from the harbor. In spite of the hundreds of surviving texts that address Constantinople, its monuments and its institutions, the city is perhaps most remarkable for what we do *not* know about it (Map 4). We

know in general terms the locations of the main street, the Mese, and the fora that it traversed. But even the sizes of the fora elude us: although we have fixed monuments in both, the boundaries of the Fora of Constantine and Theodosius have never been securely determined.⁷ And we lack the details that a more thorough archaeological examination might provide. For example, what kind of urban dwellings were there?⁸ Was the city laid out on a grid system?⁹ It is difficult to write an urban history without this sort of information.

THE INVENTION OF CONSTANTINOPLE

From the perspective of urban history, Constantinople is normally discussed as a late antique city, but it had a long and difficult history. In the early centuries, the novelty of the city allowed flexibility in both its planning and its symbolism, as it was established as a ritual center. Although little physical evidence survives, the symbolic meaning of the city is revealed in the texts. Lacking both a significant historical role and a Christian past, it required more than a small amount of inventiveness to situate the city symbolically as the capital of a world empire. As the architects of Constantine and his successors established an urban matrix, replete with the monuments necessary for it to function as an administrative center, they also created a visual vocabulary to assert the primacy of the city, to associate it with Rome, Troy and Jerusalem – that is, to present it as an imperial and religious center, grounded in a common mythology.

The idea of the Byzantine capital as “New Rome” or “Second Rome” is a topos that pervades the literature throughout the Byzantine period, and the degree of imitation, real or imagined, is striking.¹⁰ *Mimesis* guided much of the creation of meaning in the new city, a rich combination of topographical, monumental and literary comparisons. Like Rome, the city of Constantine was built on seven hills and divided into fourteen districts; its imperial palace lay next to its hippodrome, which was similarly equipped with a royal viewing box. As in Rome, there were a senate house, a Capitol, great baths and other public amenities; imperial fora provided its public spaces; triumphal columns, arches and monuments, including a colossus of the emperor as Apollo-Helios, and a variety of dedications imparted mimetic associations with the old capital.¹¹ Even Constantine’s mausoleum was established in a position that encouraged a comparison with that of Augustus’ mausoleum in Rome.¹² “New Rome” was a conceit firmly established from the beginning and developed in word and image.

But early Constantinople could also be viewed as “New Troy” – that is, the legendary ancestral home of the Romans in the East, from which Aeneas fled following its sack by the Greeks. Constantine is said to have considered establishing his new capital at Troy, and much of the borrowed symbolism in early Constantinople referred to the Trojan legend.¹³ The sculptural program in the main public bathing institution, the Baths of Zeuxippos, for example, centered on the Trojan legend.¹⁴ The colossal statue of Constantine once displayed atop the porphyry column in his forum is also claimed to have come from Troy; the base of the statue is said to have contained the palladium, the ancient wooden guardian statue associated with Troy and its fortunes, later with Rome and its destiny.¹⁵ As Sarah Bassett argues, early Constantinople was very much an intellectual construct, one that “grew up around

the intersection of history and myth . . . that makes the city the last link in a chain of destiny that stretched from Troy to Rome.”¹⁶

The idea of the city as “New Jerusalem” may be a bit more elusive. In 446, the Mesopotamian monk Daniel the Stylite, on the road to visit the holy sites of Palestine, met a mysterious figure who told him in no uncertain terms *not* to go to Jerusalem, “but go to Byzantium, and you will see a second Jerusalem, namely Constantinople. There you will rejoice in the shrines of martyrs and imposing places of prayer.”¹⁷ Accordingly, Daniel headed north and set up his column in a suburb of the Byzantine capital. Ever since the time of Daniel, there are occasional references to Constantinople as the New Jerusalem. In fact, this happens more often in current scholarship than in Byzantine texts. Scholars love the dual epithet “New Rome and New Jerusalem,” as it seems to express the combined political and religious ambitions of the city, its unique linkage of power and status.¹⁸ However, the association with Jerusalem did not rely on urban mimesis or geographical proximity or historical resonance, but rather on the rich collections of relics that city gradually accumulated, beginning with the translation of the relics of Andrew, Timothy and Luke into the church of the Holy Apostles. More than 3,600 relics are recorded, representing at least 476 different saints, most of which were imported.¹⁹ Those collected in the Pharos chapel in the Great Palace were from the Passion of Christ and seem to relate specifically to Jerusalem, although this may represent developments of the middle Byzantine period.²⁰ “New Jerusalem” thus became a metaphor for the increasingly sacred character of the city.²¹

CONSTANTINOPLE IN TRANSITION

By the sixth century, late antique Constantinople was both rich and evocative, firmly grounded both as an imperial capital and as a sacred city, situated within the broader context of world history and Roman mythology. Then things began to change. Ravaged by the plague in the sixth century, the city witnessed a severe decline and transformation in the Dark Ages of the seventh and eighth centuries. This period effectively marked its redefinition from a late antique to a medieval city. Constantinople had a population of perhaps 500,000 in the fifth century, which could have only been supported with a well-organized trading network that brought wheat from as far away as Egypt, and this also required sufficient ships, harbors and warehouses. Elaborate works of engineering, like aqueducts and cisterns, were also necessary to provide and store water for the inhabitants. Without an elaborate system of trade and without quantities of water, a city of this size could not survive, and the population declined dramatically after the seventh century. Prior to the Arab siege of 717–18, Anastasius II expelled all inhabitants who could not lay in a three-year supply of provisions. The population must have shrunk to perhaps one-tenth of its former size.²²

One result of the de-urbanization of the Dark Ages and one measure of the transformation is that the great public works characteristic of a late antique city either fell into ruin or were transformed in function. For example, the Forum of Constantine, which continued to be an important landmark, became the main emporium for the city, surrounded by the quarters of artisans. Perhaps noteworthy, in the ninth century, Basil I built a church there, dedicated to the Virgin, having

observed that the workers lacked both a place of spiritual refuge and somewhere to go to get out of the rain. Cyril Mango views this statement as significant in that it suggests that the church had replaced all other centers of social gathering.²³ At the same time, it implies that the arcades and porticoes, which were part and parcel of the late antique city, no longer existed. Elsewhere in the city, we are told, the Forum of Theodosius became the market for livestock, and further fora were similarly transformed.

The rule of Constantine V (741–75) may mark the turning point in the city's fortunes: the point at which Constantinople became a medieval city.²⁴ Born during the Arab siege of 717–18, he was the son of Leo III, who had instituted the ban on images in 726. Constantine V was probably the most reviled of the iconoclast emperors, but, as Magdalino argues, his interventions allowed Constantinople to continue. He rebuilt the land walls immediately following the devastating earthquake of 740, as the numerous inscriptions testify. He also rebuilt the aqueduct system, which had been out of service for more than a century.²⁵ Completed in 766, the scope of the work, as outlined by Theophanes, suggests this was not simply the so-called Aqueduct of Valens inside the city, but the long system of channels and bridges extending deep into Thrace. Constantine V also reorganized the urban core of the city, concentrating trade at the Harbor of Julian, and repopulated it following the plague outbreak of 746–7. He was also responsible for the reconstruction of Hagia Eirene, the second largest surviving Byzantine church in the city. Destroyed in the 740 earthquake, Hagia Eirene was rebuilt on a more stable (and influential) plan, for which dendrochronological analysis suggests a date shortly after 753.²⁶ And while there is evidence of the removal of figural decoration from Hagia Sophia during this period, such as the Sekreton mosaics, the replacement work was clearly done by skilled mosaicists.²⁷ Taken together, we may begin to suspect a coherent building program with ideological overtones.

Building activity in Constantinople was continued under Constantine's iconoclast successors. Further repairs to the land walls were carried out under Leo IV and Constantine VI, Leo V and Theophilos.²⁸ The last is best known for the construction of palaces,²⁹ and additions to the Great Palace. Perhaps more importantly, Theophilos had the sea wall and Golden Horn wall substantially rebuilt, as the numerous surviving inscriptions testify. The number of recorded inscriptions from the Golden Horn alone, sixteen in all, suggests the revival of commercial activity in this area of the city under Theophilos.³⁰ The claim of one inscription that Theophilos had "renewed the city" might not be far from the truth, but it is best seen as one stage in a century-long program of urban revival, beginning with Constantine V and extending into the reign of Basil I.³¹

The changes in the nature of patronage are significant, moving away from public monuments to private foundations: churches, monasteries, hospitals and orphanages are noted, but not new streets, fora, triumphal monuments and the like. Following the ninth century, most of the significant institutions within the city were private rather than public, and most were connected to large monasteries.³² In fact, the structure of the society, and consequently of the city, had shifted from open to closed, and its unified nature was gradually replaced with, in effect, a series of villages within the walls. Indeed, this is how the city is represented in our earliest plans, from the fifteenth century.³³ Ibn Battuta, writing in 1332, said the inhabitants lived in thirteen separate villages.³⁴

BUILDINGS IN TRANSITION

The meaning of the late antique city as analyzed above, is derived primarily from textual references, insofar as they have been deciphered in current scholarship. The rich and overlapping elements of urban iconography were critical to the self-awareness of the city's inhabitants, as well as to its many visitors. The image of Constantinople that I would like to evoke is of a city in transition. Based on the evidence provided by its surviving monuments, it should be possible to envision the city not as something static and fixed in time, but as something dramatic and changing. Although we have little evidence for either the maintenance or the elaboration of the urban matrix, the transformation of specific monuments may be seen as reflecting the changing nature of the city as a whole. In this respect, the close analysis of surviving buildings may be informative.

The church of Hagia Euphemia at the hippodrome is known from excavations (Figure 25.1).³⁵ It began its life in the fifth century as the centerpiece of an aristocratic palace built by a high court official, an uppity eunuch of Persian origin named Antiochus, who served as *praepositus, cubicularius*, praetorian prefect, patrician and consul under Theodosius II. The palace was entered from a street perpendicular to the north side of the hippodrome, accessible by means of an elegant semicircular portico and garden. Symmetrically disposed pavilions of intricate geometry opened onto the portico. On the central axis lay a large ceremonial hall or *triclinium*, which was hexagonal and niched in plan, and covered by a dome. Small colonnaded porticoes opened outward to the surrounding gardens. We might imagine the palace complex to have been a smaller version of the pavilions and gardens of the Great Palace, for when Antiochus overstepped his position, he was accused of living "like an emperor, not like an emperor's minister."³⁶ His palace was confiscated around 436, and he was forced to take holy orders. Sometime later – although it remains unclear exactly when – its hexagonal hall was converted into a church, dedicated to a local saint, Euphemia, whose main shrine lay in Chalkedon. In the troubled seventh century, when the Asian shore was threatened by Persian attack, the relics of Euphemia were transferred by the emperor Heraclius for safekeeping, either in 615 or 626.³⁷ Mathews had argued for a sixth-century conversion for the building, before the transfer of relics.³⁸ A later conversion seems more likely, perhaps even as late as the 796 restoration by Eirene and Constantine VI.³⁹ Once Euphemia was established near the hippodrome, however, tombs and mausolea were added around the building as her cult grew in importance.⁴⁰ In the late thirteenth century following the Latin occupation, the church was restored once again and redecorated with a cycle of paintings chronicling the life of Euphemia.⁴¹

Each step in the transformation of the site had important reflections in the transformation of the city around it. Antiochus' palace lay in a position indicative of his political importance. The emphasis on ceremonial spaces reflects the ritualization of daily life among the aristocracy in late antiquity; Antiochus, as the charges against him suggest, was living like an emperor. The conversion of the palace into a place of Christian worship reflects the rising power of the Church, which gradually took over many official duties of the state administration and assumed a role in civic governance.⁴² Similarly, the incorporation of the saint's relics reflects both the reduction in scale of the city during the Dark Ages and its increasingly sacred character. While

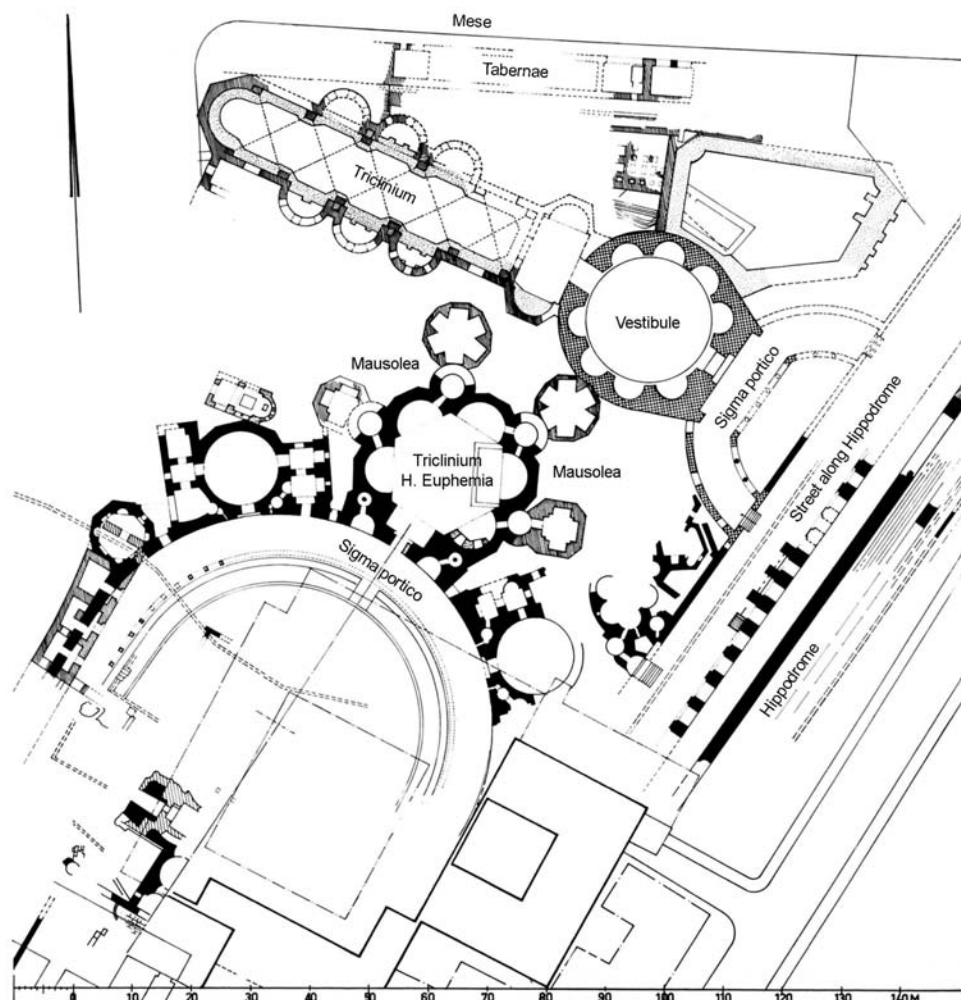


Figure 25.1 Palace of Antiochus (church of St Euphemia), site plan, redrawn after Müller-Wiener 1977.

Euphemia's original martyrrium in Chalkedon seems to have disappeared from the historical record, the relocation of her sanctuary at the very center of the city accords with the functional and ideological redefinition of the city in the early Middle Ages. A restoration at the end of the eighth century would fit with the urban revival under the efforts of Constantine V and his successors.⁴³ The addition of burials around the church marks a fundamental transformation in the character of the city. While Roman law had prohibited burials inside the *pomerium* of the city, during the Middle Ages intramural burials became increasingly common, often set in relationship to sacred space or sacred objects.⁴⁴ Finally, the redecoration of the church in the late thirteenth century represents the attempt to reassert the city's sanctity in the wake of the Latin occupation, when many of its holy shrines were plundered. As a defender of Orthodoxy, whose shrine lay at the heart of the city, Euphemia would

have gained new resonance against the backdrop of Palaiologan attempts for a union with the Church of Rome.⁴⁵

We can witness a similar history of transformation at the Kalenderhane Camii (Theotokos Kyriotissa), thanks to the careful excavation of Striker and Kuban (Figure 25.2).⁴⁶ The archaeologists identify six major construction phases at the site following the construction of the Aqueduct of Valens, which forms its northern boundary. The historical development represents responses to preexisting site conditions, as older components were incorporated into new structures. The site developed from a small bath erected *c.* 400, into an increasingly complex agglomeration with two churches set side by side at different angles. It is unclear when the north church fell out of use; as it survives, the south church represents a major period of construction *c.* 1195–1204. Rapidly built and expensively furnished, it incorporated a variety of older vaulted components.⁴⁷ Thanks to the odd angle at the connection to the aqueduct, we can begin to get some sense of an urban grid and the relationship of the building to it.⁴⁸

The Myrelaion Palace underwent a similar transformation through its long history (Figures 22.1, 25.3).⁴⁹ Here we may see that accompanying the changes in patronage there was often a change in scale. From the first phase of construction on the site, an enormous rotunda survives. This seems to have been the vestibule of a late antique urban palace. In the early tenth century, the walls of the rotunda were filled in with a colonnaded cistern to form a platform for the construction of the family palace of the emperor Romanos Lekapenos. The general plan of the palace may be reconstructed as a pi-shaped building with a central portico opening onto a courtyard. Except for the palace chapel, all components of Romanos' palace were built on the area taken up solely by the entry vestibule of its predecessor. The chapel was built as a private family chapel; its design is elegant, and it was lavishly decorated with marble cladding, mosaics and glazed ceramics, but the dome of the Myrelaion is barely 10 feet in diameter, a dramatic contrast to the 100-foot dome of Hagia Sophia. The smaller scale should be seen *not* as a reflection of strained circumstances, heavy taxation or limited technology, but as indicative of the changes in the orientation of Byzantine society, from public to private.⁵⁰

Shortly after it was constructed, the entire Myrelaion Palace was converted into a nunnery. This change corresponds to the rise of monasticism, which became an essential element in Byzantine society. In addition, the change tells us something about the organization of Byzantine monasticism, for it seems no major remodeling was necessary. The structure within a monastic community, it seems, was similar to that of an aristocratic household, and the architectural setting could be similar as well.⁵¹ At the upper levels of society, both consisted of a closed social group, hierarchically organized, with servants, retainers, properties and economic interests. The conversion of secular properties was a matter of concern in the middle Byzantine period, resulting in an attempt to provide a legal definition of a monastery, and to protect the small property owner from the threat of takeover.⁵² The Council of Constantinople of 861, for example, spoke against the founding of monasteries in private houses, although it may not have had much effect.⁵³

The Myrelaion chapel was intended from the beginning to be the burial place of Romanos and his family.⁵⁴ While it is unclear where within the chapel the tombs were situated, Romanos established a new precedent for imperial burial, replacing

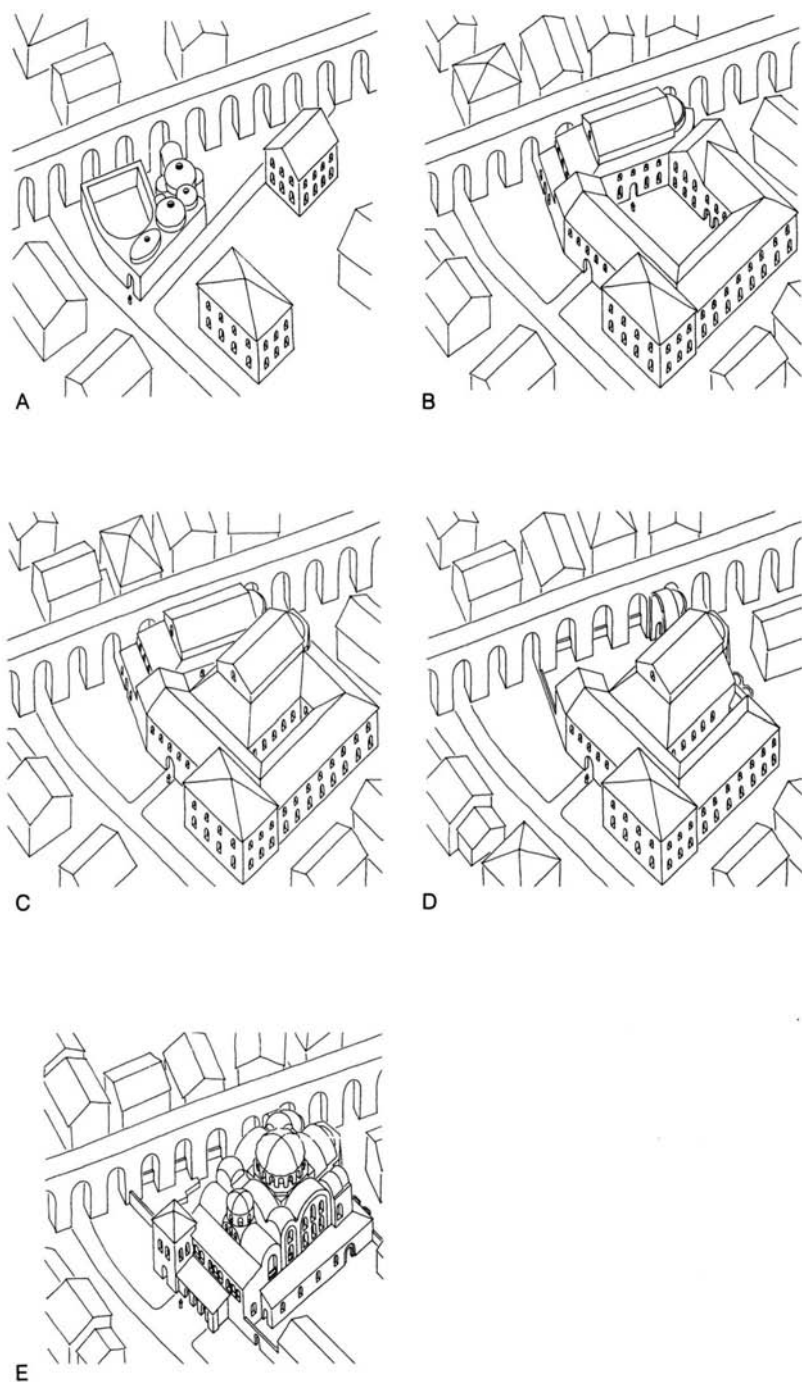


Figure 25.2 Kalenderhane Camii (Theotokos Kyriotissa), reconstruction site sketch showing main phases: A. c. 400; B. late sixth century; C. after 687; D. tenth to twelfth centuries; E. c. 1195–1204, from Striker and Kuban 1997.

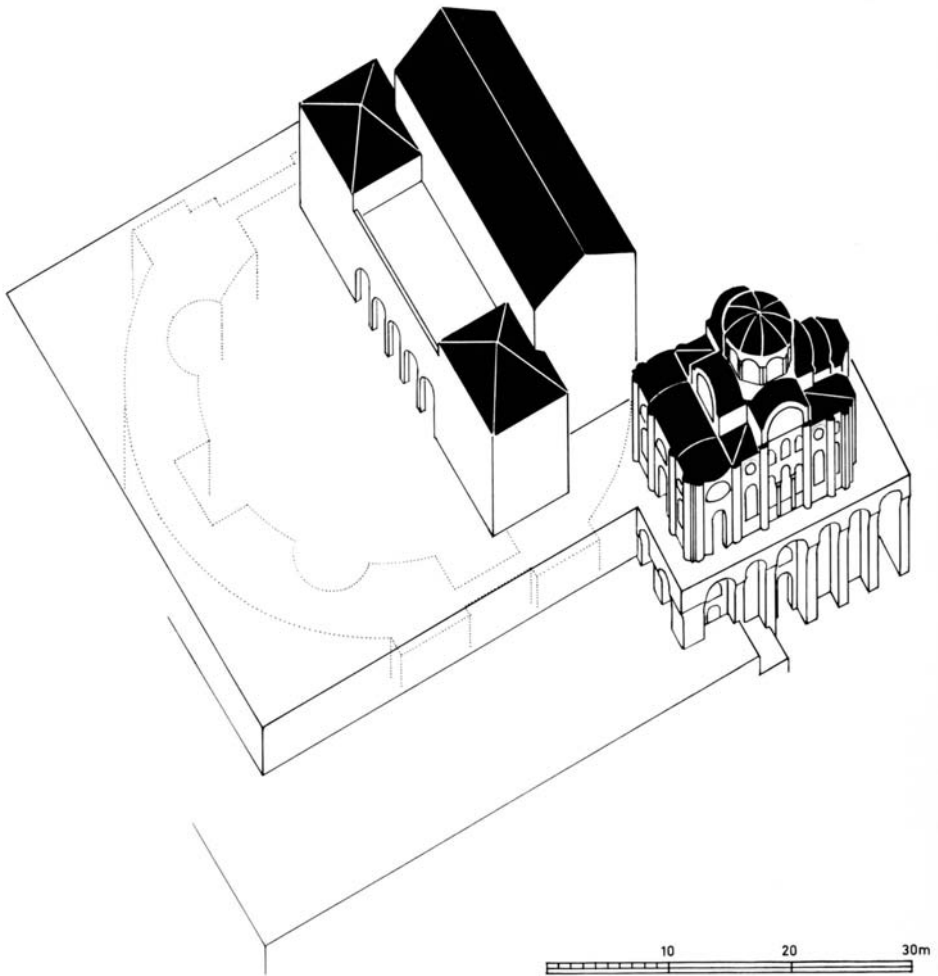


Figure 25.3 Myrelaion Palace (Bodrum Camii), reconstructed view, from Striker 1981.

the church of the Holy Apostles.⁵⁵ As a usurper who had positioned himself as father-in-law to the legitimate emperor, Romanos was in a sensitive position, and we may speculate that to have prepared a burial place for himself at the Apostoleion would have seemed imprudent.⁵⁶ Whatever his motivation, by the early eleventh century it had become *de rigueur* for the emperor to found an urban monastery as a setting for burial.⁵⁷

The rising importance of privileged burials within the city is seen in the late Byzantine period as well, when the substructures of the Myrelaion chapel were refurbished to house extensive aristocratic burials.⁵⁸ The ad hoc nature of the burials, set within a preexisting architectural space, parallels the retrofitted burials in the narthexes of the Chora monastery, where they began to appear within a few decades of the reconstruction by Theodore Metochites, c. 1316–31.⁵⁹

Also emphasizing the change in scale, the so-called Boukoleon Palace represents the reduced core of the Great Palace, as it was enclosed by a fortification wall by Nikephoros Phokas in the tenth century (Figure 25.4).⁶⁰ This area, some distance from Hagia Sophia, comprised the ceremonial core of the palace during the medieval centuries, and did not include the famed mosaic peristyle, the Chalke Gate, the Magnaura, nor many other of the important ceremonial spaces of late antiquity. It enclosed the audience hall known as the *Chrysotriklinos* and the famed Pharos church, as well as the Seljuk-style pavilion known as the Muchrutas.⁶¹ The so-called Palace of Justinian may follow the model of a late antique seaside palace, but it seems to have been constructed entirely of spolia – and a very mixed batch at that.⁶² Cyril Mango has tracked the indications of the fortification wall: to the west, the wall extended from the so-called Belisarius tower and the Çatladıkapi, extending northward to meet the hippodrome at the Kathisma. Along its western perimeter, the wall extended northward from the lighthouse, and its like may be traced to include the

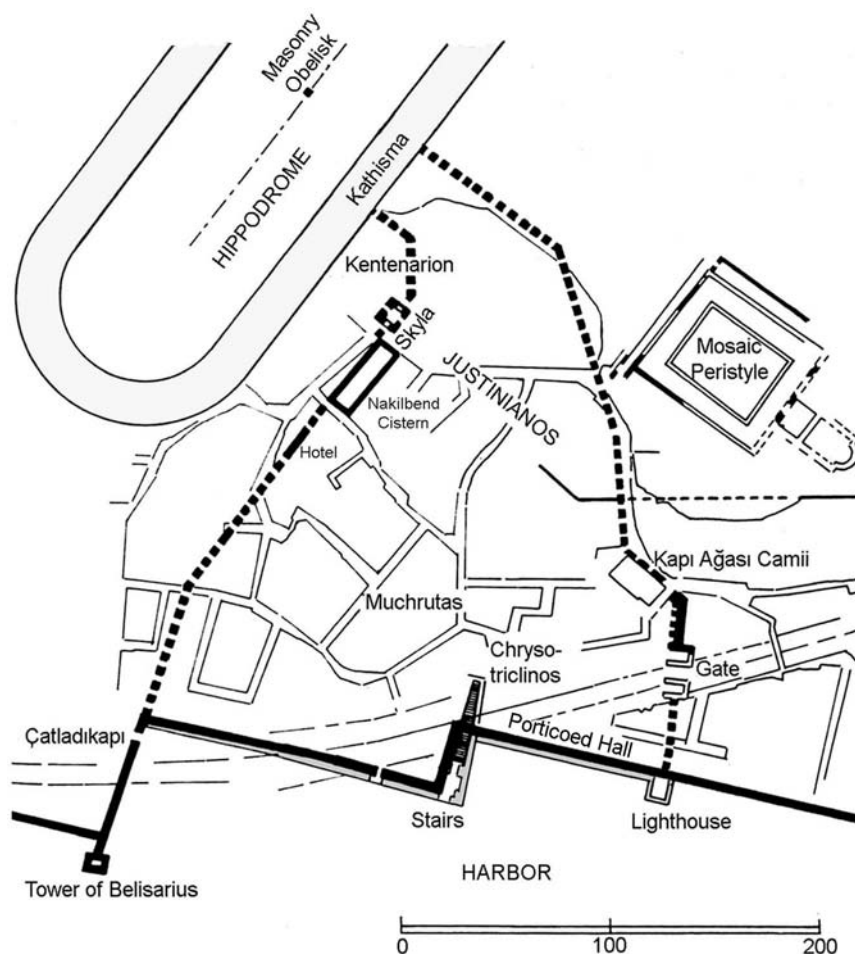


Figure 25.4 Boukoleon Palace, hypothetical plan, redrawn after Mango 1997.

remnants of a fortified gate, which faced eastward, and traces of a wall beneath the Kapı Ağası Camii. Much of the eastern wall is uncertain, but a salvage excavation carried on Küçük Ayasofya Bulvarı turned up a portion of the defensive wall, which now decorates the lobby of the Eresin Crown Hotel.⁶³ The fortification transformed the Great Palace from a sprawling villa to a fortified enclosure. The next step in the medievalization of the imperial residence was to remove it from the center altogether at the end of the eleventh century, when it was replaced by the Blachernae Palace in the northern corner of the city.⁶⁴

URBAN THEMES IN URBAN BUILDINGS

Significant works of architecture and their decorative programs may reflect aspects of both a civic identity and an urban history, for buildings respond to their environments in many different ways. Individual monuments, if properly read, can tell us as much about the city as can the textual evidence. The early sixth-century church dedicated to Hagios Polyuktos gives us some sense of how architecture figured in the political discourse of the day.⁶⁵ Although the church lay in ruins by the thirteenth century, the excavations revealed vast substructures and a rich array of ostentatious architectural details, including the famous marble niche heads formed by the spreading tails of peacocks. As the excavator, Harrison, has argued, Hagios Polyuktos replicated the Temple of Solomon in its measurements, translated into Byzantine cubits: measuring 100 royal cubits in length, as was the Temple, and 100 in width, as was the Temple platform – following both the unit of measure and the measurements given in Ezekiel 42:2–3. Harrison estimates the sanctuary of the church to have been 20 royal cubits square internally, the exact measurement of the Holy of Holies, as given in Ezekiel 41:4. Similarly, the ostentatious decoration compares with that described in the Temple; if we let peacocks stand in for cherubim, as Harrison suggests, cherubim alternate with palm trees, bands of ornamental network, festoons of chainwork, pomegranates, network on the capitals, and capitals shaped like lilies.⁶⁶

A powerful noblewoman, Anicia Juliana was one of the last representatives of the Theodosian dynasty, who could trace her lineage back to Constantine. When her son was passed over in the selection of emperor in favor of Justin I and subsequently Justinian, the construction of Hagios Polyuktos became her statement of familial prestige. It was the largest and most lavish church in the capital at the time of its construction. The adulatory dedicatory inscription credits Juliana with having “surpassed the wisdom of the celebrated Solomon, raising a temple to receive God.”⁶⁷

As the immediate predecessor of Justinian’s Hagia Sophia, the rediscovered church of Anicia Juliana emerges as part of a monumental discourse, in which political rivalries within the city were expressed in the language of architecture. The grander scale and the transcendental interior of Hagia Sophia may be viewed as Justinian’s response to Anicia Juliana’s presumption. Similar symbolic readings might be proposed for Justinian’s church, as the Temple of Solomon or even as the Throne of God from the vision of Ezekiel. Justinian’s famous, if legendary, exclamation at the dedication, “Solomon, I have vanquished thee!” may have been directed more toward Juliana than toward Jerusalem.⁶⁸ Procopius uses similar Temple-like language about Hagia Sophia, insisting that God “must especially love to dwell in this place which He has chosen.”⁶⁹ The architectural discourse was ultimately more

about the divinely sanctioned authority of emperors following the model of Old Testament kings than about sacred topography. Clearly, both Juliana and Justinian understood the symbolic value of architecture, with which they could make powerful political statements. In the case of Hagios Polyeuktos, it was both a statement that could not be put into words and one that would never be repeated.⁷⁰

In the case of Hagia Sophia, however, the underlying allusion to the Temple took many directions beyond simply eclipsing the prestige of a rival. As a New Temple rebuilt by Justinian at the heart of Constantinople, it symbolically transformed the city into a New Jerusalem, emphasizing its sacred character, without necessarily replicating its forms.⁷¹ It also bolstered Justinian's claims to imperial authority, grounding his rule in the divinely sanctioned kingship of the Old Testament.

A second example is provided by the monastery of Christ Pantokrator, now known as the Zeyrek Camii, built originally c. 1118–36 by the emperor John II Komnenos and his consort Eirene. It was perhaps the most significant Byzantine architectural undertaking of the twelfth century (Figure 25.5). In addition, the *typikon* survives, giving us some sense of the use of the building in the twelfth century. The general outline of the Pantokrator's Byzantine history is well known, with three churches built side by side in rapid succession.⁷² The south church was constructed first to be the *katholikon*, or main church of the monastery, dedicated to Christ Pantokrator. Largest, most lavishly decorated and best preserved of the three churches, the south church represents the largest cross-in-square church of the Byzantine period, with a dome more than 8 meters in diameter, rising 24.5 meters above the floor. Its plan, with lateral aisles, measured approximately 100 × 100 Byzantine feet – that is, the same dimensions as the dome bay of Hagia Sophia. Almost upon completion of the south church the complex was enlarged. To this a second cross-in-square church was added to the north, dedicated to the Virgin Eleousa, which was open to the laity and served by a lay clergy. Finally, the curious, twin-domed funeral chapel of St Michael was sandwiched between the two churches.

The rapid transformation of the monastery through its eighteen-year construction history is particularly interesting, as formal concerns shifted from monumentality to complexity. The founders clearly intended to situate it within the urban context of the city, as is evident both from its prominent visual position and from the *typikon*, which redirects the Friday urban processions between Blachernae and the Chalkoprateia churches, so that the important icons (*signa*) could be brought into the Pantokrator to participate in the imperial memorial services.⁷³ Similarly the famed icon of the Theotokos Hodegetria was to be brought annually to the monastery to commemorate the day of John's death.⁷⁴

Larger concerns are also evident in the funeral chapel, which the *typikon* refers to as the *heroon*.⁷⁵ Destined to be the dynastic mausoleum of the Komnenoi, the oddly archaic term *heroon* – meaning a hero's shrine – calls to mind the monumental martyria of the early Christian period, of which the Holy Apostles was the nearest example. Nikolaos Mesarites employed the term *heroon* in reference to the imperial mausoleum at the Holy Apostles, explaining that those buried there are heroes.⁷⁶ The mausoleum of Constantine the Great and his successors lay just up the hill from the Pantokrator, perhaps visible from the monastery's entrance. By the time of its completion in 1136, the Pantokrator had developed into an irregular five-domed

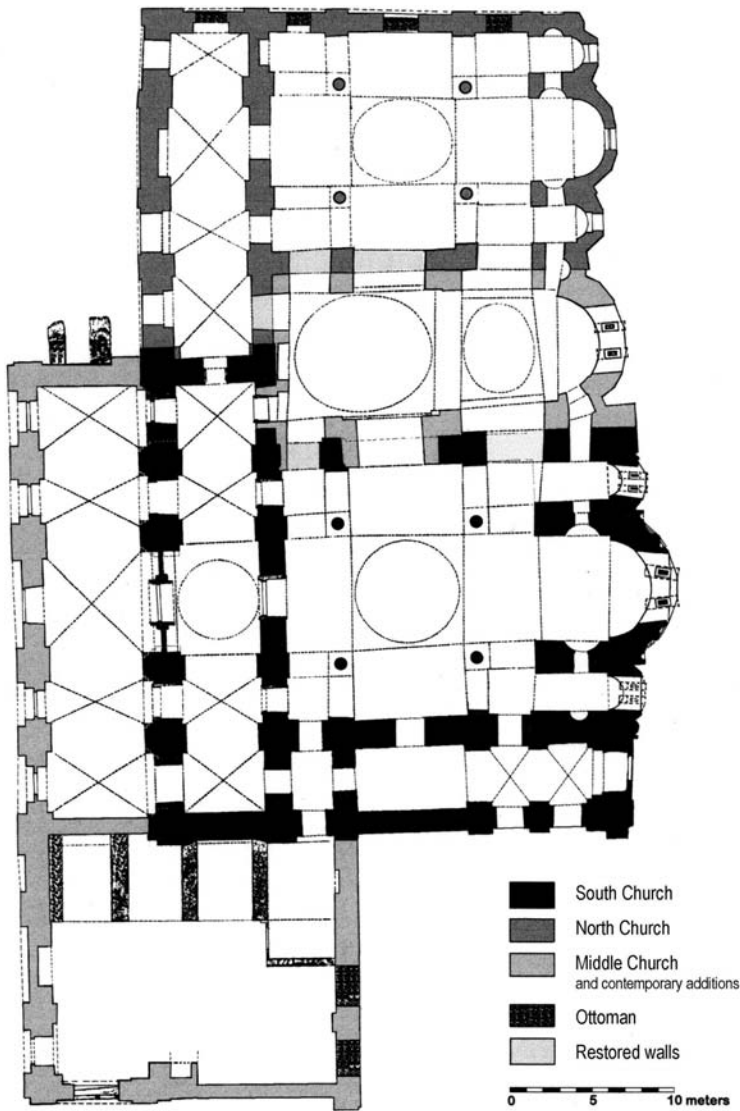


Figure 25.5 Zeyrek Camii (Christ Pantokrator), plan drawn by R. Ousterhout.

complex, which also may have been intended to visually equate the Pantokrator with the five-domed church of the Holy Apostles. In its final form, it would seem to be a part of an elaborately constructed imperial ideology, designed to bolster the claims of the Komnenos family to the legitimacy of their rule, to ground them in Byzantine history. Their success in this world was as much a concern as their salvation in the next.

In a final example, the rebuilding and decoration of the monastery of the Chora, now known as the Kariye Camii, c. 1316–21, we can read the architecture and decoration as part of a discourse with the Byzantine past and its urban identity. One

of the oldest religious foundations in the city and formerly under imperial patronage, the church was completely enveloped and lavishly decorated by Theodore Metochites, who was prime minister of the empire and one of the great humanist scholars of the fourteenth century. Metochites' building is as complex as Hagia Sophia is monumental and perhaps followed the model of the Pantokrator in its church-cluster plan.⁷⁷ In the building program we find new architectural additions artfully set against older elements, which were left exposed. I would argue that the lack of integration, the contrast, the juxtaposition of old and new, were intentional. The new portions may be understood as a response to history, an attempt to establish a symbolic relationship with the past.⁷⁸ The new additions never obscure the older edifice but are joined to it in a way that seems to respect its character. The domes of the naos and the funeral chapel are aligned, and the detailing of the older apse is reflected in that of the newer. Moreover, the builders seem to have been inspired by the difficulties of adding to an older building, to design around, but to maintain the integrity of, the historical core of the monastery. The masons would appear to be addressing not just new functional considerations, but also the symbolic significance of the historical setting.

As a scholar Theodore Metochites had a great concern with the past and with his position in history. The significance of the site's history that underscores the architectural design is also reflected in the mosaic decoration, perhaps seen most clearly in the Deesis mosaic, which depicts Christ and the Virgin, to whom the church and monastery were dedicated, with the two previous imperial benefactors kneeling at their feet. The mosaic thus spells out Metochites' lineage as founder, perhaps most obviously in the "family resemblance" between Prince Isaac Komnenos in the Deesis mosaic and Metochites in the adjacent dedicatory panel.⁷⁹ These two portraits establish a sort of visual dialogue with the past that corresponds to the architectural relationships.

The mosaic program places the Chora monastery under the protection of the Virgin Mary, while reinforcing her role as the guardian of the city. The monastery was dedicated to the Virgin, and in his poetry Theodore Metochites referred to both monastery and Virgin as his protection and refuge. These ideas are expressed visually in the image of the Virgin positioned above the main entrance to the church, where she is depicted with Christ in her womb.⁸⁰ The image repeats the significant features of a miraculous protective icon of the Virgin that was kept at the nearby imperial church of the Blachernae, where the sacred relic of the Virgin's robe was also kept. Traditionally regarded as the sacred palladia of the city, both the robe and the icon were paraded around the walls when the city was under siege – that is, the Virgin, represented by the robe and icon, provided spiritual protection and was capable of turning back invading armies.⁸¹ In the Chora image, the Virgin's cascading robes frame the view looking westward into the monastery courtyard. Normally a dedicatory image like this one would be placed leading into the church. That role is taken by a pendant image of Christ, for the main church was dedicated to Him. But the monastery proper was dedicated to the Virgin, and that explains her odd positioning. Moreover, the view westward was toward the land walls, which would have been visible in the fourteenth century, and the image of the Virgin could be read in association with them. The Virgin was thus the protector of both Theodore Metochites and his monastery – and she was also the protector of the city and its walls. Like the

Blachernae church, the Chora offered a spiritual outpost for the defense of the city. Late Byzantine coins often show the Virgin surrounded by the walls of the city, emphasizing her civic role. Thus, in spite of Constantinople's transformation and decline, the image of the Virgin of the Chora can be read in a broader civic context. It testifies to the fact that Constantinople retained an urban identity and a civic consciousness into its final period.

CONCLUSIONS

Although we may see the radical transformation of the city and its monuments, it is remarkable how the Byzantines often failed to recognize the changes around them, or, at the very least, failed to reflect the change in their writings. The triumphal entry celebrated by Basil I in 879, which is recorded in detail, could easily have taken place several centuries earlier. But what about its settings? Although the Golden Gate continued to function for occasional triumphal entries, its defensive function was gradually given precedence, evident in the reduction and blocking of the passageways.⁸² Basil enjoyed two ceremonies outside the walls and stopped for ten receptions between the Golden Gate and Hagia Sophia.⁸³ Following a military parade into the city, Basil was acclaimed by both factions and the demarchs in appropriate ceremonial dress. The cortege proceeded through the city on horseback, stopping for acclamations and receptions at the Sigma, the Exakionion, the Forum of Arcadius, the Forum Bovis, the Capitol, the Philadelphion, the Forum of Theodosius, the Artopolia and the Forum of Constantine. There they dismounted and were met by the patriarch outside the church of the Theotokos, which Basil had founded. After changing into civilian garb, they continued on foot to the Milion, and to Hagia Sophia. Finally they proceeded to the Great Palace, according to the usual ceremonial movements, terminating in a banquet.

What is perhaps most remarkable here is that with the exception of the church built by Basil, all monuments or public spaces used in the ceremony were pre-iconoclastic; most were Roman in character. While the rhetoric surrounding Basil emphasized his renewal of the city, we are given no indication of the condition of the monuments and monumental spaces. The appearance of continuity is emphasized, but the ceremony may mark a transformation from actual order to symbolic order. The text of rituals like Basil's entry may demonstrate the gap between the desires and realities of Byzantine society. At the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that we as scholars know Byzantine Constantinople more as a concept than a reality. One wonders if this was true for the Byzantines as well.

In contrast to this willful avoidance of the present reality, late Byzantine patriotic writings offer a more transparent view.⁸⁴ Most important among these works is the *Byzantios*, an oration in praise of Constantinople composed by Theodore Metochites, the patron of the Chora monastery, recently discussed by Paul Magdalino.⁸⁵ Magdalino emphasizes that the rhetorical attention to the city's past greatness coincides with the period of revival under Michael VIII and Andronikos II.⁸⁶ Indeed, Metochites seems to recognize the diminished state of affairs, but he gives it a positive spin: Constantinople as a city is constantly regenerating itself. By way of comparison, he points out that as birds molt, new feathers appear amid the older plumage; in an evergreen plant, losses are not fatal but are replaced by new

growth. In a like manner Constantinople renews itself, he argues, so that ancient ruins are woven into the city's fabric to assert their ancient nobility amid the new constructions. Similarly he notes how the ruins of the city are recycled in new constructions both within the city itself and, as evidence of the city's generosity, in other cities as well. The intended message of Metochites' encomium is of unchanging greatness, implying that the new creations replicate the pattern of their predecessors, while glossing over the more tawdry realities of ruin and spoliation. For Metochites the writer, Constantinople could be simultaneously eternal *and* a city in transition. Metochites the patron of architecture might have had a somewhat different perspective. For the modern viewer and reader, it is hoped that archaeology and philology, texts and material culture, taken in equal doses, might offer a balanced view of the medieval city.

NOTES

- 1 A distant ancestor of this essay was presented at the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where I held a fellowship in 2001. I am grateful for their support.
- 2 For a general discussion of *ekphraseis* see Maguire 1981; for their application to architecture, see Ousterhout 1999: 33–8; also Webb 1999.
- 3 Mango 1985; Dagron 1974; Dagron 1984; Magdalino 1996a; Magdalino 2007a. Because of the illustration limit, this essay must sadly follow suit.
- 4 Müller-Wiener 1977; Mathews 1976.
- 5 Karamut 2007.
- 6 Müller-Wiener 1977: 312; Mango 2001: 24–5; but see M. Gökçay in Karamut *et al.* 2007: 170–4; R. Asal in Karamut *et al.* 2007: 180–215.
- 7 Müller-Wiener 1977: 255–65; Bauer 1996: 167–203; Berger 2000: 167–8.
- 8 Kriesis 1960: 322–7; Baldini-Lippolis 1994: 279ff.
- 9 For a recent attempt at reconstructing the street system, see Berger 1987; Berger 1997; Berger 2000.
- 10 For the literary references, see the summation of Fenster 1968: 20–86.
- 11 Mango 1985.
- 12 For the Roman monuments, see Platner and Ashby 1929; for the Holy Apostles and its foundation, see Mango 1990.
- 13 For Ilion/Troy as an alternative site, see Theophanes 1883: 23; Zonaras 1841–97: III, 13–14.
- 14 Stupperich 1982: 210–35, who associates the Trojan iconography with civic identity; see also Bassett 1996.
- 15 Malalas 1831: 321; Mango 1993.
- 16 Bassett 2004; see also Rose 1998: 98–100.
- 17 Delehay 1923: 1–94, at 8.10–11, pp. 11–13.
- 18 See e.g. Sherrard 1965, with chapters entitled “The New Rome” and “The New Jerusalem.”
- 19 See the discussion by Wortley 1982: 254; Maraval 1985: 92–104; Wortley 2006.
- 20 Heisenberg 1922: 27; see Magdalino 2004.
- 21 For a reconsideration of the “Jerusalem question,” see Ousterhout 2006b: 98–116; and Ousterhout forthcoming; also Flusin 2000.
- 22 Mango 1985: 53 and *passim*.
- 23 Mango 1985.
- 24 Magdalino 2007a, for much of what follows.
- 25 Mango and Scott 1997: 607–9.
- 26 Ousterhout 2001b: 5, 8.
- 27 Brubaker and Haldon 2001: 20–1.
- 28 Foss and Winfield 1986: 54.
- 29 For the remains incorrectly identified as the Bryas Palace at Küçükyaşı, see now Ricci 2003.
- 30 Mango 1951; Foss and Winfield 1986: 70–1.

- 31 Mango 1951; see also Ousterhout 1998.
- 32 Mango 1985; see also Ousterhout 1997: esp. 39–41.
- 33 Manners 1997.
- 34 Van der Vin 1980: I, 254.
- 35 Naumann and Belting 1966; more recently, Akyürek 2002.
- 36 Lavin 1962: 19; Zonaras 1841–97: II, 591–2.
- 37 AASS, Sept., V: 275; Naumann and Belting 1966: 23–4.
- 38 Mathews 1971: 61–7.
- 39 Mango 1999. I thank Jordan Pickett for his observations on Hagia Euphemia.
- 40 Naumann and Belting 1966: 49–53; with limited remains, the dates of the mausolea remain uncertain.
- 41 Naumann and Belting 1966: 112–94.
- 42 Thomas 1987.
- 43 Magdalino 2007a.
- 44 Constanas 2006; Snively 2006; Saradi-Mendelovici 1988.
- 45 Talbot 1993 does not discuss Euphemia; for the period in general, see Geanakoplos 1959.
- 46 Striker and Kuban 1997: 32–100.
- 47 Striker and Kuban 1997: 95; reiterated by Striker 2001.
- 48 Not noted by Berger 2000: 170.
- 49 Striker 1981: 13–16, and pl. 26; Janin 1969: 351–4.
- 50 For a critique of the western medieval perspective of Byzantine architecture, see Ousterhout 1996.
- 51 Magdalino 1984: esp. 102–5; I have discussed this relationship in the context of Cappadocian settlements: Ousterhout 2006a: 176–81; Morris 1995: 92.
- 52 I am grateful to Danuta Gorecki for discussions on this subject; see Gorecki 1981: esp. 209–10; Thomas 1987: 37–8, 133–6; Charanis 1948: esp. 115.
- 53 Morris 1995: 151; Thomas 1987: 133–6.
- 54 Striker 1981: 6.
- 55 Grierson 1962: 3–60.
- 56 Striker 1981: 9.
- 57 Grierson 1962: 59.
- 58 Striker 1981: 29–31.
- 59 Underwood 1966: vol. I, 280–99.
- 60 Müller-Wiener 1977: 225–8; Mango 1997; Bardill 1999, which includes the latest bibliography.
- 61 See most recently, Asutay-Effenberger 2004.
- 62 Mango 1997; Mango 1995.
- 63 The excavation is unpublished but its excavator Metin Gökçay promises a report shortly.
- 64 Müller-Wiener 1977: 223–4.
- 65 Harrison 1986: 410–11; Harrison 1989.
- 66 Harrison 1986: 410–11; Harrison 1989.
- 67 Harrison 1986: 5–7.
- 68 Dagron 1984: 303–9; Harrison 1989: 276–9.
- 69 Procopius, *Buildings*, I.i.61–2.
- 70 Ousterhout forthcoming. Recent studies have offered a more nuanced history to the architectural discourse; see Bardill 2006, with a thorough bibliography; note esp. 339–40.
- 71 Ousterhout 2006b.
- 72 Ousterhout *et al.* 2000; Ousterhout *et al.* forthcoming.
- 73 Pentcheva 2006a: 165–73.
- 74 Pentcheva 2006a: 173–7.
- 75 The following is summarized from Ousterhout 2001a: esp. 149–50.
- 76 Downey 1957: esp. 892 and 915: XL.1.
- 77 Ousterhout 2002.
- 78 Ousterhout 2000, for much of what follows.
- 79 Cf. Underwood 1966: II, pls 26 and 36.
- 80 Underwood 1966: II, pl. 20.
- 81 Pentcheva 2006a: 145–63.
- 82 Müller-Wiener 1977: 297–300; Mango 2000.

83 Constantine Porphyrogennetos 1990: 140–7; McCormick 1986: 154–7, 212–30.

84 Fenster 1968: 185ff.

85 Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, *Codex Vind. Phil. Gr.* 95, 274v–275r; recently discussed by Magdalino 2009.

86 Magdalino 2009.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE PRACTICE, PERCEPTION AND EXPERIENCE OF BYZANTINE FORTIFICATION*



Nikolas Bakirtzis

Fortifications defined the Byzantine landscape: they enclosed cities, towns and monasteries, guarded passages and communication routes, and protected the socio-economic infrastructure of the Byzantine countryside.¹ This chapter will address aspects of the practice, the use and the perception of fortifications during the middle and late Byzantine periods following the gradual transformation of cities in the late sixth century, which altered the urban experience in Byzantium.² Works of military architecture from this period reflect the needs of societies contending with intense military conflict, socio-political transition and insecurity.³ Byzantines protected their cities, towns and hinterlands through an arduous and expensive policy of reusing, maintaining and adapting towers, walls and outposts. Masons and their patrons drew from the rich traditions of late antiquity and learned from their opponents. They were able to utilize and improve existing works and to make the most of the amassed expertise gained through time. During the middle Byzantine period military architecture played a central role in efforts to reorganize the empire and to revive urban life. Following the Fourth Crusade in 1204, the political landscape of Byzantium became increasingly fragmented and fortifications were the primary means to protect urban life.

After introducing key research that has led to a more textured and subtle analysis of the role and meaning of fortifications in Byzantine society, this essay will present three categories for the study of fortifications based not on architectural types or military technology but instead on function, daily use, strategic role and meaning. Among these categories the fortifications of large urban centers were the most important as they were the focal points, or anchors, of broader strategic systems. The final section will explore aspects of the military architecture of one of these cities, Thessalonika, whose defensive system is a prominent example of the practice and the experience of Byzantine fortification. Particular focus will be given to the continuous use of city walls and the efforts to maintain a loose ring of fortifications in its hinterland. Speeches and inscriptions that mark important events in the history of the city will help to demonstrate that these ubiquitous, often plain, structures became part of daily rituals and defined the experience of urban and rural space.

Although at a promising point, the study of Byzantine fortifications remains

inconclusive. Few scholars have attempted to address the topic as a whole.⁴ It is difficult to date and study extant fortifications because they were continuously rebuilt and altered. In addition, late Roman and Crusader fortifications have often overshadowed middle and late Byzantine military architecture.⁵ As a result, our approach and understanding of the complex, multilayered structures of the Byzantine world has been limited. Byzantine fortification relied on maintenance and adaptive renovation. As such, the dating and identification of construction phases are complicated and depend heavily on the available literary and epigraphical evidence. Attempts to draw solid conclusions based on building techniques, typological features and military architecture present problems unless they are securely grounded in the archaeological record.

In the past twenty-five years, increased interest in several aspects of the Byzantine city and its transformations have contributed to a richer and more nuanced understanding of defensive enclosures on a local and regional level.⁶ Coupled with work on secular architecture, economics, historical geography, Byzantine military organization and the analysis of preserved military manuals (*taktika*), extensive surveys and systematic archaeological research have offered a revived understanding of Byzantine fortifications and their role in daily life.⁷ Defensive works were not isolated monuments viewed from a distance; rather, walls and towers defined the daily life of urban dwellers. Perhaps the most ubiquitous structures of Byzantine daily life, military architecture shaped the visual and material culture of societies.⁸ As such, references to fortifications and their *hierotopical* role appear in icons, wall paintings, mosaics, speeches and written histories, demonstrating their importance.⁹

This shift in research allows us to classify Byzantine fortifications according to the urban entities they protected, their role in the socio-economic transformations of the Byzantine period and their function in both local and general defensive networks.¹⁰ This tentative arrangement of fortifications falls into three categories that follow an inverted pyramidal scheme based on the strategic organization of broad regions around the great urban centers of the Byzantine empire.

FORTRESSES, TOWERS AND LINEAR WALLS

Fortresses, towers and linear walls offered a variety of uses, and with these flexible tools, state and local authorities controlled access to urban centers and supported the infrastructure of the Byzantine countryside. The organization of fortresses followed the defensive principle of successive lines of defense with a maximized utilization of the natural geography of each location. As components of broader and regional fortification schemes, such as the defensive organization of Bithynia, they were used to accommodate small garrisons and administrators that controlled strategic locations, natural passages and communication routes.¹¹ An excellent example of such a protective system can be found in Cyprus, where the middle Byzantine fortresses of Agios Hilarion, Bufavento and Kantara on the Pentadaktylos mountains jointly controlled the mountainous passages connecting the plain of Mesaoria to the bay of Kerynia and its port.¹² Near Constantinople, the twelfth-century Byzantine fortress of Hieron sits on a steep hill overlooking a crucial water channel: the confluence of the Bosphorus and the Black Sea.¹³ Similarly, the fortress of Oria, with building phases from the Roman period, relied on two independent components to visually and

physically control the narrow pass of Temboi, where Macedonia meets Thessaly.¹⁴ The 1130 fortress of Lopadium on the Mysian plain controlled a key passage of the river Rhyndakos.¹⁵ The fortress of Petrela in central Albania, used throughout the Byzantine period, guarded the valley of Shkumbi and a critical point of the Via Egnatia in its westernmost part leading to Dyrrachion.¹⁶ In other cases, fortresses were used to guard property, provide a residence and manage agricultural production. The case of Pythion founded by John VI Kantakouzenos (1347–54) as his private treasury is an instructive example.¹⁷ The fortress, which occupied an outcrop overlooking Kantakouzenos' land properties in the upper Evros river valley, featured two enclosure walls and a great donjon tower. The complex served both as a residence and as a last place of defense.

Solitary towers were dependencies of larger entities that served a variety of roles such as guard posts, landmarks and storage units.¹⁸ They were usually quadrilateral in plan and had between three and five levels supported on wooden beams, barrel vaults and arches. For defensive reasons, their entrance was located at a higher level while frequently their lower level featured a cistern. In addition, machicolations articulated their upper floor to strengthen their defense. Their location depended on their particular function, and in many cases a simple wall enclosure provided additional protection and accommodation for the needs of small garrisons and tower-keepers. Such was the organization of the three-level tower of Apollonia, situated on a rocky promontory on the Aegean coast east of the river Strymon in eastern Macedonia.¹⁹ The tower guarded the seaside road and offered visual control of the river's delta and the eastern coast of Chalkidiki and Mt Athos and Thassos. The tower of Phonias on the north-east coast of the island of Samothrace served a similar role controlling the delta of a small river and surveying the passage of ships in this part of the Aegean.²⁰ The towers of Marmarion and Agios Georgios guarded the two sides of the lower Strymon river at a crossing point near ancient Amphipolis and were used for the storage of agricultural produce.²¹ Monastic towers were an important category as they were used by monasteries to regulate and guard their land possessions.²² The numerous examples of late Byzantine towers associated with the monasteries of Mt Athos in the broader region of the Chalkidiki, such as at Mariana and Galatista among numerous others, demonstrate their diverse role as landmark indicators, silos and residential units.²³

Linear walls were used to blockade natural passages and isthmuses. Accordingly they were used selectively throughout the Byzantine period in the tradition of late Roman examples such as the Anastasian wall of Thrace.²⁴ The Hexamilion (six miles) wall along Corinth's isthmus and the long wall at Kassandreia (ancient Potidea) along the isthmus of the Kassandra peninsula in the Chalkidiki were extensively restored in the late Byzantine period in hopes of preventing the Ottoman advance.²⁵ The long aqueducts that supplied the *kastra* of Anastasioupolis/Peritheorion in western Thrace and Christoupolis (modern Kavala) in eastern Macedonia were also used as linear walls supported by towers and having few well-controlled gates.²⁶

FORTIFICATIONS OF TOWNS AND KASTRA

The fortifications of towns and *kastra* protected the urban entities and the administrative and economic centers of the Byzantine period. Defensive enclosures shaped

the transformed landscape of urban centers at the end of late antiquity.²⁷ The *polis* gradually became the *kastron* (castle), which by definition exemplifies the role of military architecture.²⁸ Literary sources reflect this transformation by referring to towns as castles.²⁹ Yet, the emergence of the Byzantine castle-town was not the result of an abrupt disruption in the life of cities and countryside but the product of a dynamic transformation with variable developments.³⁰ Imperial, religious and local authorities reorganized the empire and from the eighth and ninth centuries onwards revived urban life.³¹ To achieve this goal, they invested in the maintenance of fortifications and required the direct contribution of local populations through taxation and physical labor. The system of *kastroktisia* (castle building or castle ownership) was implemented extensively from the tenth century to secure the good condition of defensive enclosures.³²

During their long and complex transition from the so-called “Dark Ages” to the middle Byzantine period, numerous cities, such as Abdera and Maroneia in Thrace, Serres, Veroia, Vodena and Philippi in Macedonia, Corinth and Argos in the Peloponnesos as well as Amorion, Ankyra, Sardis and Miletus in Asia Minor, among numerous examples, contracted in size, acquiring new sets of walls for protection.³³ In accordance with local and regional historical developments, new enclosures took advantage of the defensive qualities of earlier walls and the natural terrain; in addition, they utilized the available building materials. Frequently these castles acquired new names that mirrored aspects of their building transformation. Abdera and Plotinoupolis in Thrace, for example, became known respectively as Polystylon, which means “having many columns,” and Didymoteichon, meaning “having twin walls.”³⁴ These names mirror aspects of the towns’ defenses: the first refers to the spoliation of the ancient city and the second points to the plan of the latter example’s fortification. The complete or partial abandonment of cities’ fabric for smaller fortified urban entities reflects an increased need for defense. Other urban centers, such as Diocletianoupolis in western Macedonia or Comana Pontica in the Black Sea region of Anatolia, were abandoned to be succeeded by newly founded towns like Kastoria and Dazimon (Tokat) respectively, which were located in nearby naturally fortified sites.³⁵ Furthermore, the foundation of new fortified towns such as Servia in western Macedonia and Monemvasia in the Peloponnesos on naturally protected locations along major communication routes and passages reflects an increased awareness and appreciation of the defensive qualities of the natural landscape.³⁶

Similar to large cities, these systems relied on the principle of successive lines of defense. These fortification lines responded to their internal organization, frequently to lower, upper town and citadel.³⁷ The examples of Servia, Serres and Redina among numerous others illustrate this principle.³⁸ What appears to be an established attribute of these defensive systems is the presence of a formidable last place of defense, the acropolis, and the maximized utilization of the natural terrain.³⁹ The Byzantine fortifications of Amastris on the south coast of the Black Sea and Zichna in Macedonia adjusted to the natural qualities of their location.⁴⁰ The fortifications of monasteries could be included in this category as they protected organized communities. Large monasteries resembled small towns and fittingly they were protected by complete fortification systems. The examples of the monastery of the Virgin Kosmosoteira in Bera (Pherrai) as well as the Megiste Lavra, Vatopedi and Iveron

on Mt Athos, among numerous others, featured complete sets of wall enclosures, formidable towers and well-protected gates.⁴¹

THE FORTIFICATIONS OF LARGE URBAN CENTERS

The fortifications of large urban centers enclosed cities like Constantinople, Thessalonika, Nicaea and Nicomedia, which retained their central administrative and economic role as well as their physical size throughout the Byzantine period.⁴² As a result, their late Roman enclosures continued to be used under a constant state of maintenance. These works never lost their effectiveness and thus remained a central source of inspiration for Byzantine military architecture. This important aspect of Byzantine fortification should not be overlooked as it reminds us of the lasting traditions of late Roman military architecture.⁴³ The main design principle of these fortification systems, which made abundant use of spoliated building material, was the construction of successive lines of defensive walls surrounding the urban fabric of cities. A moat, outer wall, main rampart system and acropolis were the main components of these systems; each adjusted to the needs of its location. Special attention was given to the protection of gateways and to the inner rampart, which was supported by strong towers and bastions.

The long history and continuous use of these defensive systems demonstrate the impact of military architecture on broader Byzantine culture.⁴⁴ Walls, towers and gates were a part of daily life, deeply embedded in the individual and communal experience of urban life. Their preservation was a great responsibility for citizens and their leaders as it secured their livelihood and basic existence. Dedicatory inscriptions manifested the maintenance work of city leaders and the labor of citizens eager to preserve what they inherited from their fathers. Fortifications contained and visually displayed a city's history. As such, the fortifications of Byzantium's great urban centers offer a fascinating framework to probe questions about the design, organization and maintenance of fortification works in the Byzantine period. Among these cities, the *symvasileuousa* Thessalonika and its broader hinterland provide an excellent example to address two distinct aspects of Byzantine military architecture: the restoration of defensive walls as a culturally embedded civic experience and the strategic definition of a city's hinterland through the construction of a loose network of towers. The remnants of these two systems mirror the sophistication of a defensive network that maintained Thessalonika's role through to its final capitulation to the Ottomans in 1430. Moreover, evidence from literary and epigraphical sources speaks of the deeds of patrons, defenders and attackers entangled in the thousand-year effort to control Thessalonika's strategic port.

WORD, IMAGE, AND CIVIC IDENTITY ON THE WALLS OF BYZANTINE THESSALONIKA

Thessalonika's strategic location at the key of the Thermaic gulf in north Greece fostered its central role in the Byzantine empire (Map 2).⁴⁵ The city is the natural seaport outlet of the broader region of central Macedonia, which is defined by the physical boundaries of Mt Olympus to the south, Mt Vermion to the west and the river Strymon to the east.⁴⁶ The natural passages of the Axios river valley to the west

and the Strymon river to the east link the city and the northern Aegean to the Balkan heartland. As a result, since its foundation in 316/315 BC by the king of Macedonia, Cassander, and through the Roman and the Byzantine periods, the city's port became one of the main hubs of commercial activity in the Balkans.⁴⁷ In addition, Thessalonika was located along the famous Via Egnatia, the primary land communication route, which ran through the southern part of the Balkan peninsula. The city's economy depended on the rich agricultural production of the fertile plain of the Axios, Gallikos and Loudias rivers to the west, the Mygdonian plateau of the Koroneia and the Bolbe lakes to the north-east, and the lush region of central Chalkidike to the east. The abundant freshwater lakes and rivers of Mt Chortiates, located to its east, secured the city's water supply.

The defenses of Thessalonika constitute one of the best-preserved monuments of Byzantine military architecture (Map 3).⁴⁸ They are the product of a continuous building process that mirrors the city's long history. Although their main building phase dates from the end of the fourth century AD, the physical and literary evidence of repairs, additions and alterations demonstrates that protecting the city was a never-ending arduous practice that entailed rich investments on the part of Thessalonian society and its leaders.

The Goth intrusions of the third century instigated the construction of a hastily built wall, in several stages, with the extensive use of spolia from some of the deteriorating public and religious institutions of the ancient city. The major phase of the city's enclosure dates from the end of the fourth to the middle of the fifth century.⁴⁹ A brickwork inscription from the eastern walls of the city identifies one Hormisdas as the patron of this construction effort.⁵⁰ This ambitious fortification project followed the path and utilized the remains of earlier Roman defenses from the late third and early fourth centuries. Strong rectangular towers supported the walls while a series of triangular bastions strengthened the more vulnerable lower walls of the city. As in the third century, the construction of walls and towers utilized whole parts of the ancient city. The fading institutions of the city's pagan past, such as temples, *gymnasia* and theaters, were demolished for materials to help the city defend itself. The western land walls of the city bear the striking visual evidence of this practice (Figure 26.1).⁵¹ The façades of curtain walls and towers were built in two vertical zones of different building material. The lower parts of the walls were constructed of marble spolia, mostly benches and architraves from the city's stadium.⁵² The upper parts of the wall were built almost entirely in brick articulated with a shallow cornice and two tiers of superimposed double brick arches. A variety of brickwork crosses embellished the triangular spaces between these arches.

During the fifth and the seventh centuries additional construction projects completed and refined the existing defensive system.⁵³ From the eighth century onwards restoration efforts on the city's walls continued to employ solutions drawn from the rich repertoire of late Roman fortifications without novel defensive modifications. An important development dates from the beginning of the tenth century when a triangular acropolis was added to the northern part of the city's enclosure incorporating a separate late Roman enclosure.⁵⁴ The project demonstrates the need for an independent enceinte attached to the city walls. The acropolis did not only serve as a last place of refuge from an outside attack; it also accommodated the governor and the authorities of Thessalonika as a bastion against popular unrest.⁵⁵ During the late



Figure 26.1 Thessalonika, western walls. N. Bakirtzis.

Byzantine period, a strong citadel developed in the northernmost tip of the acropolis exemplifying the necessity for additional protection.⁵⁶ Appropriately, the citadel was extensively rebuilt by the Ottomans in the 1430s to serve as their headquarters and became known as *Yedikule / Heptapyrgion* due to the seven towers that punctuate its enclosure.⁵⁷

Outside these architectural developments and the overall utilization of the city's early Christian ramparts, daily life in Byzantine Thessalonika adjusted to its enclosed reality. Kaminiates' description of Thessalonika mirrors the dominant role of the city's enclosure for the protection of its inhabitants.⁵⁸ Existence within walls had become a standard experience that influenced art and culture. Nothing illustrates this experience better than a seventh-century mosaic in the basilica of St Demetrios (Figure 26.2). It is an instructive reflection of an embattled society, which suffered successive sieges and attacks by Avars and Slavs from the end of the sixth through the seventh century. In the mosaic panel, the saint stands and embraces two of the church's patrons: the archbishop and the eparch of the city.⁵⁹ Demetrios places his hands on the shoulders of the two men in a powerful gesture of support. In the mosaic, which is located on a pier in one of the most important churches in Thessalonika, the bishop and the eparch are presented as the saint's protégées. This meeting of the secular and religious leaders of the city is set before its fortification walls. The artist appropriated the image and the symbolism of the fortification to use its crenellations to frame the officials' heads, thus creating secular halos similar to the aura that denotes young Demetrios. This image testifies to the



Figure 26.2 Thessalonika, basilica of Agios Demetrios, mosaic of donors: Demetrios flanked by the eparch and the bishop of Thessalonika, seventh century. C. Bakirtzis.

important role the walls played in Byzantine urban life; more than merely a backdrop, they came to symbolize the essence of the city's existence.⁶⁰ Through daily interaction, the appearance of the walls of Thessalonika became so common and familiar to its citizens that a stylized depiction of a fragment came to refer to the city as a whole. Over time, the walls also acquired a sacred dimension.⁶¹ The anonymous

writer of the Miracles of St Demetrios referred to Thessalonika as being protected by an immovable intangible wall formed by the protection of its patron saint.⁶² In this way, the walls came to symbolically represent St Demetrios' protection of the city of Thessalonika.

Given the importance of their protective and symbolic role, care of the walls became crucially important for both secular and religious leaders. So important was this responsibility, that in the mosaic, the city officials and the walls are permanently woven together into a single entity. The largest and most comprehensive restoration campaigns were initiated before or after an attack. In this way, significant sieges can be read in the wall's complex building phases. Similarly, dedicatory inscriptions, such as those of Bishop Eusebios from the end of the sixth century, and *basilikos protospatharios* Marinos and *basilikos strator* Kakikis from 862, offer insights into such early maintenance efforts.⁶³

An inscription, discovered in 1879 during the demolition of the city's sea walls, documents efforts by the *protospatharios* Chatzilakios and the bishop, Ioannis, to fortify the city's sea walls to prepare for an attack by the Saracens.⁶⁴ In fact, Chatzilakios' efforts were preceded by those of *protospatharios* Petronas. According to Kaminiates, Petronas devised a strategy to prevent access to the city's sea walls by creating an underwater barrier.⁶⁵ Learning that the Saracens planned to attack by sea with ships equipped with siege towers, Petronas' men dumped ancient sarcophagi, marble *stelae* and other architectural fragments into the sea. The project was never finished as the newly appointed *strategos* of Thessalonika, Chatzilakios, changed course and, with the bishop's help, focused on the renovation of the sea ramparts. Apparently the carving of their dedicatory inscription preceded the successful completion of the work, as on 29 July 904 the Saracens led by Leo of Tripoli besieged the city.⁶⁶

An example of a successful restoration campaign in anticipation of attack dates from the end of the tenth century. An epigram from the Palatine Anthology commemorated the restoration of the eastern gate of Kalamaria by the *hyparchos* Basil in the late 970s.⁶⁷ This work was part of an extensive project to renovate the defense of Thessalonika during the reign of Basil II (976–1025). This effort responded to the growing threat from the Bulgars, who under Samuel (976–1014) attacked the city and its immediate hinterland in 980, 989 and 996.⁶⁸ When the emperor arrived in the city in 991 he found the walls in good condition and most probably further contributed to their renovation.⁶⁹

In another similar episode, the state and church authorities collaborated to maintain the city's defenses in the 1160s. The southern façade of the tower, which protects the location where the west wall of the acropolis adjoins the north wall of the city's enclosure, bears the epigraphical evidence of the edifice's restoration. Two brickwork inscriptions attribute the work to *megas chartoularios* Andronikos Lapardas and Michael Prosuch, members of the Komnenian court.⁷⁰ From the same period, another inscription, located on the upper part of the inner wall of the eastern curtain of the acropolis enclosure, announces the labor of the metropolitan of Thessalonika, possibly Vasileios Achreidinos (1145–69).⁷¹ These restorations did not introduce any typological changes or defensive innovations in the city's defenses; the walls were simply repaired and maintained. Yet, the preservation of the city's walls during this period could be understood in the context of Manuel I Komnenos' (1143–80)

strategic preparations for an impending attack from the Normans of Sicily who finally besieged Thessalonika on 24 August 1185 after the emperor's death.⁷²

The restoration of Thessalonika's fortifications continued through the late Byzantine period as inscriptions commemorate the 1315/16 repair of Hyaleos, *logethete* of the army, of a part of the sea wall, as well as the work to Andronikos, most probably Andronikos III Palaiologos, who invested in the city's defense.⁷³ As the aforementioned inscriptions indicate, patrons inscribed their accomplishments on fortification façades in order to disseminate information and to pronounce authority.⁷⁴ The surfaces of walls, towers and gates served as bulletin boards, presenting evidence of restoration works. Inscriptions were commonly placed where they could be viewed, usually in the proximity of gates, roads and passages. As such, these references continuously reminded Thessalonikans and visitors of the important accomplishments of past leaders, lending them permanence, accuracy and importance.

Besides the display of patron's deeds, inscriptions served an apotropaic role. The curious location of a dedicatory inscription from one of Thessalonika's gates demonstrates its protective significance. The gate occupies a position of great significance in the defenses of Thessalonika. At this location, the eastern walls of the acropolis adjoin the wall circuit of the city close to the so-called Trigonion tower. An inscription dates the work to 1336 and attributes it to Ioannis Chamaetos, military commander of the acropolis, who acted under the orders of Anna Palaiologina, wife of Andronikos III Palaiologos.⁷⁵ Carved on the inner face of one of the spoliated marble used as the gate's jamb, the inscription was visible only by those passing through the open gate (Figure 26.3). The inscription initiates an intimate, almost personal relationship with those crossing this threshold. Its location protects and identifies the line that separates space into two different realities. Making a safe passage through thresholds carried enormous importance in daily life and popular culture.

In some other cases an inscription's message carried equal, if not greater, importance than the actual fortification. A sizeable four-line brickwork inscription on one of the triangular bastions of the upper western walls of Thessalonika, once more in the proximity of a gate, communicated an exaggerated statement: "By the strength of our mighty despot Manuel, this tower was erected from the foundations in this wall by duke Georgios Apokaukos Palaiologos. By the strength of Manuel the mighty!"⁷⁶ A simple structural study of the tower reveals that the eloquently praised work, dating between 1369 and 1373 when Manuel II (1391–1425) was despot of the city, was nothing more than a rather poor restoration of its upper part.⁷⁷ Yet, the presence of the inscription on the tower's façade was of great significance for it praised the tower and identified it with its patron.

The protective role of inscriptions on fortification façades was complemented by the use of crosses and spolia. Crosses not only protected but also declared Thessalonika's Christian identity, its long history and the emperor's authority.⁷⁸ During the time of battle, crosses were a visual and vocal weapon against any aggressor. In Kaminiates' narration of the siege of Thessalonika by the Saracens in 904, the cross became a palladium for the city's defenders: "Those who were on the walls replied with a louder cry calling upon the salvific weapon of the cross for aid against the enemies."⁷⁹ From the walls of Constantinople, six eighth-century monograms were inscribed in the form of the cross to demonstrate, both visually and



Figure 26.3 Thessalonika, gate of Anna Palaiologina and its dedicatory inscription. N. Bakirtzis.

literally, the power of the cross:⁸⁰ “O great cross help! O Theotokos help! Victory in the cross!”

Where the use of inscriptions served to commemorate events and individuals, the use of spolia, which was common practice in the city walls from the third and fourth centuries, accommodated practical, aesthetic and apotropaic purposes.⁸¹ Middle Byzantine examples demonstrate the complex aspects of the practice. Similar to framed works of art hanging on a wall, funerary *stelae* animated the appearance of Thessalonika’s fortification façades. The eastern façade of the middle Byzantine tower that guards the south-eastern corner of the so-called Vardariou fort at the south-west corner of the city’s enclosure was adorned with a second-hand, funerary *stele* that depicts a seated man accompanied by his standing servant (Figure 26.4).⁸² A part of a mullion capital was placed on top of the *stele*, crowning the depicted scene. Another example can be viewed on the upper, western side of the aforementioned



Figure 26.4 Thessalonika, spoliated *stèle* incorporated on the façade of a tower from the Vardariou fort. N. Bakirtzis.

twelfth-century tower of Lapardas where, among crosses and decorative patterns, two antique relief figurines were displayed within brickwork frames. In addition to serving an apotropaic role, the placement of these sculptural pieces on the walls and towers of Thessalonika demonstrated a visual reception and a conceptual appropriation of their imagery. By the middle Byzantine period, these monuments of pagan antiquity were an imbedded component of the visual culture of the early Christian city, thus accepted and imitated. Displayed as icons, funerary *stelae* and figural sculpture sanctified the defenses and stressed the engagement of the divine in the protection of the city.

Numerous other fortifications from the middle and late Byzantine periods demonstrate similar visual sensibilities to the use of spoliated material.⁸³ The walls of Byzantine Ankara, Nicaea and Amastris, among others, offer eclectic compositions of late Roman architectural parts, statues and relief sculpture, which created a distinct visual impression.⁸⁴ These were not merely imaginative decorative attempts but the conscious appropriation of physical fragments of cities' distant past. They were historic relics possessing apotropaic powers. For example, in 838, Theophanes Continuates referred to the images of lions, most probably spoliated sculpture, that protected the ramparts of Amorion.⁸⁵

Praise and admiration of fortification works for their unconquerable beauty became a topos in middle and late Byzantine literary tradition.⁸⁶ For example, Theodore Laskaris praised the city of Nicaea for its defenses and Niketas Choniates

equated the city to a beautiful, grand tower; while Theodore Metochites admired its walls for their “unconquerable beauty.”⁸⁷ In a tenth-century epigram, John Geometres commemorated the strength and beauty of a tower from the land walls of Constantinople: “To us God gave a tower of strength, a tower of firmness, a tower of life not to be broken, overcoming all the sufferings of life and the assaults and machines of the barbarians, full of all beauties and wonders.”⁸⁸ An anonymous inscription from the walls of Christoupolis echoes a very similar message. Located on the north façade of a rectangular tower from the northern curtain of the middle Byzantine *kastron* it reads: “Oh tower divinely sustained, God shields you as the most beautiful of all towers.”⁸⁹ Guarding a key position in Christoupolis’ defenses, the tower was protected by God and as such it was the most beautiful, the best of all towers. The inscription and the small cross carved next to it protected the walls and were employed against the enemy.⁹⁰

To this day, the façades of Thessalonika’s fortifications reflect their long, layered, utilitarian history. They present a monumental synthesis of building phases, embellished with inscriptions, crosses and spolia. They separated urban from rural, inside from outside, known from unknown, and friendly from hostile.⁹¹ The defensive enclosure of Byzantine Thessalonika protected and contained urban life. Upon the enemy’s arrival they became a “deadly ring,” according to the writer of the Miracles of St Demetrios.⁹²

A PROTECTIVE CIRCLE FOR LATE BYZANTINE THESSALONIKA

Beyond the limits of its monumental enclosure, Thessalonika’s defense depended on the control of its broader hinterland. A network of fortified towns and fortresses surrounded Thessalonika throughout the Byzantine period. Starting from the south and moving clockwise around the city, these fortifications included (see Map 2): the castles of Platamon and Kitros on the coast of Pieria, Servia, Voden and Veroia along the Aliakmon river, Gynaikokastron on the Axios river valley, Siderokastron, Serres and Amphipolis along the Strymon river, Christoupolis on the Aegean coast of eastern Macedonia, Redina on the eastern end of the Mygdonian plateau and Kassandreia in the Chalkidiki peninsula.⁹³ In addition to these sites, towers and monastic fortifications strengthened this defensive network by controlling key locations. The various components of this fortified perimeter date from different periods and feature multiple building phases and alterations that reflect the continuous care of Byzantine authorities. On the whole, the defensive organization of central Macedonia around Thessalonika was designed to control access to the city and to protect its rural hinterland.

An instructive reference to this defensive network exists in the form of a public speech from the very last decades of Byzantine Thessalonika. In the autumn of 1383, shortly after Ottoman forces surrounded Thessalonika to begin a four-year siege that led to its first occupation, Manuel II Palaiologos, independent emperor of the embattled city between 1382 and 1387, publicly addressed its citizens.⁹⁴ His speech offered advice, comfort and praise to a strained society, urging the city to prepare for a grueling battle. He began his oration by lamenting the loss of a series of fortifications that once surrounded Thessalonika like a circle.⁹⁵ Although the speech

lacks specific references and dates, it is mostly likely that Manuel was referring to the efforts of Andronikos III Palaiologos (1328–41) to construct and restore a system of fortifications in the shrinking hinterland of Thessalonika.⁹⁶ Like many before him, Andronikos III was keenly aware of the strategic importance of the city. Past experience helped him to recognize the need to fortify its broader region; declared sole emperor in 1328, he rose to power after a long civil war with his grandfather, Andronikos II (1282–1321).⁹⁷ His final victory was largely decided in Macedonia, and thus he was well aware of the fragmented political realities of the time.⁹⁸ The Byzantine state lacked the financial, military and political means to control vast areas of land. The disintegration of Byzantine administration had undermined the region's defensive systems. In effect, the immediate rural environs of Thessalonika had become a highly contested borderland. As emperor, Andronikos III established a network of strategically placed fortresses in the city's hinterland. In addition, it is assumed that he restored and supported existing *kastra* such as Platamon, Veroia, Serres, Redina, Kitros and Kassandreia to effectively outline the external limits of the city's contested hinterland.⁹⁹ His efforts remain one of the finest examples of Byzantine fortification and planning.

According to John Kantakouzenos, Andronikos III constructed three fortresses: Siderokastron, which controlled the northern part of the Strymon river valley; Chrysoupolis (ancient Amphipolis), located on the delta of the same river; and Gynaikokastron, overlooking the lower Axios river valley.¹⁰⁰ Built *ex novo* in the 1330s, Gynaikokastron provides an excellent example of the emperor's strategic goals.¹⁰¹ Kantakouzenos described the castle's strength and praised the beauty of its location (Figure 26.5).¹⁰² The fortress clings to the rocky peak of a steep outcrop located a few kilometers distance from the western banks of Axios. The river valley in this part of Macedonia is distinctly wide and flat. Standing at 106 meters, the rocky hill provides one of the only locations from which to view approaching armies. A water stream runs just north of the foothills, making this an ideal location for a settlement. Due to its location, Gynaikokastron was invaluable for the defense of Thessalonika, and, according to sources, its commander answered directly to the governor of the city. The castle has a rough trapezoidal plan. Its outer wall measures 614 meters, enclosing a space of approximately 2.5 hectares. Rectangular and circular towers punctuate the curtain wall and sensitive spots along the defense. The walls and towers were built directly on the bedrock and feature rubble masonry with the sporadic use of brick. A citadel occupies the north-east corner of the fortified complex with a rectangular tower crowning the higher point. The tower measures approximately 9.5 by 13.5 meters and rises to a height of 7.5 meters. Constructed using the *cloisonné* technique – intervening bands of four to five courses of brick – the tower's walls are 162 centimeters thick. The ground floor accommodated two vaulted cisterns. The fortress was built according to the latest developments in contemporary military architecture featuring three successive lines of defense around the massive donjon, which functioned both as the last place of defense and as the primary residence for the castle's commander.

Belonging to the same building campaign of Andronikos III, Siderokastron and Chrysoupolis guarded equally important strategic locations along the route of the Strymon river, effectively controlling the upper and lower parts of the river valley. They were of comparable size and followed a similar organization that featured three



Figure 26.5 Gynaikokastron, general view. N. Bakirtzis.

lines of defense, with a strong donjon tower as the last place of resistance.¹⁰³ Like Gynaikokastron, they were modest in size and designed primarily as military outposts; they could accommodate a military garrison and small settlement. Their role was not to stop an army's approach; rather, they functioned as part of an early warning system organized around Thessalonika. In the late Byzantine period, control of the city's hinterland was achieved by military observation, preparedness and the balanced maneuvers of forces.¹⁰⁴

One of the least known yet important aspects of the defensive organization of Thessalonika's environs during the late Byzantine period was the central role of the monastery of the Virgin Mary on nearby Mt Chortiates. Known as Kissos in antiquity, the mountain separates the peninsula of Chalkidiki from the Mygdonian plateau.¹⁰⁵ The region was of strategic importance for the Byzantine metropolis because Chortiates' ravines offered an opportunity for invading armies to approach and attack the city from higher ground.¹⁰⁶ According to literary sources, Chortiates' long monastic tradition dates from as early as the sixth century. Kaminiates attested to this tradition as he described the mountain as an active monastic centre. Historical references indicate the emergence of a central monastic institution in the late thirteenth, fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, a period when Thessalonika was highly contested among an array of aspiring rulers.¹⁰⁷ The fortified monastery of Chortaitou and its dependencies, whose remains can be seen in the schoolyard of the homonymous contemporary village, regulated the mountainous region and controlled access to the city.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the monastic community controlled the

city's water supply, as they managed the mountain's water springs. In effect, the defensive responsibility for the most vulnerable area of Thessalonika's immediate surroundings was outsourced to a monastic community.

In general, monasteries were important tools for the control of contested rural regions. This was a sophisticated Byzantine policy, which was highly effective during periods of political instability and transition. The goal was not to control land by military means. Instead, rulers maintained indirect influence over local societies through monastic patronage. Research has shown that monasteries were among the great landowners, administering intricate and vast economies.¹⁰⁹ The ability of monasteries to adjust to political instability ensured continuity, while their spiritual influence and economic strength secured close relationships with local communities. The *kastron* of Bera, developed in conjunction with the twelfth-century fortified monastery of Kosmosoteira presents a useful example regarding the diverse role of monastic institutions and their leading position in Byzantium's hinterland.¹¹⁰ Similarly, the monastery of St John Prodromos on Mt Menoikeion near Serres, the monastery of Panagia Soumela in the Pontos and numerous other monasteries on Mt Athos and in Serbia served a central role in the control of rural regions.¹¹¹

The implementation of this complex defensive scheme around Thessalonika was not Andronikos III's sole invention. Manuel II Palaiologos' reference to the necessity of a defensive circle drew from a long tradition established by emperors like Basil II and Manuel I among others.¹¹² Using Thessalonika as his base, Basil II invested in the construction and renovation of fortifications in his efforts to reclaim western Macedonia and to secure Byzantine control.¹¹³ The physical and epigraphical evidence of these projects demonstrate his efforts to protect the broader Macedonia region and its great urban center, Thessalonika.¹¹⁴ Almost 400 years later, the conceptual clarity of Manuel II's oratory allusion encapsulates this experience, founded on his personal involvement and the amassed expertise gained through centuries-long efforts to control access to the Byzantine metropolis.¹¹⁵ Manuel's oration provides the very last testimony of a coherent fortification system around Thessalonika.

CONCLUSION

Fortifications were experienced by all strata of Byzantine society. State, Church and civic authorities led building projects within the framework of a long tradition of military architecture. The multilayered nature of the physical remains of defensive works reveals their continuous use and the importance placed on maintenance and restoration. When necessary, the introduction of novel technological solutions and the implementation of defensive systems was not a preoccupation, but the result of informed reactions to impending threats. It appears that the practical and modest art of adaptive reuse was one of the main contributions of Byzantine engineers and builders to the history of military architecture. The example of Thessalonika demonstrates that the ability to renovate and effectively sustain a defensive system over the course of ten centuries was the outcome of knowledge, skill and confidence.

Through the middle and late Byzantine periods, fortifications were the foremost tools to protect and control space. Organized in broad and local defensive systems, they flexibly adjusted to variable needs and served multiple purposes. These works,

which constitute the largest in scale and the most costly projects in Byzantine architecture, were built for war, yet they were experienced on a daily basis. This day-by-day experience became an essential part of civic culture. The perception of fortifications in Byzantine society was shaped by their long history and their protective role. Inscriptions, spolia and decorative details adorned and more importantly informed city walls. The visual and conceptual image of a city's defenses came to denote self-assurance and civic pride. Fortification façades spoke a visual language which lent them historical continuity and offered solace to their defenders.

NOTES

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- 1 Lawrence 1983; Foss and Winfield 1986.
- 2 Brandes 1989: 81–131; Dagron 1987; Angold 1985; Bouras 2002; Saradi 2006.
- 3 Ivison 2000; Bryer 1986; Ćurčić 1997.
- 4 Lawrence 1983; Foss and Winfield 1986. Also, see the more regional studies of Deroko 1950; Foss 1977a and 1982. See Moutsopoulos 1980, for an early attempt to broadly approach the topic.
- 5 See the early studies of the fortifications of the empire's great cities: on Constantinople, see Van Millingen 1899; Krischen *et al.* 1938; on Thessalonika, see Tafrali 1913; on Nicaea, see Schneider and Karnapp 1938; on Crusader fortifications in the Levant and Greece, see Rey 1871; Bon 1937; Andrews 1953; Boase 1967.
- 6 Angold 1985; Dunn 1994; Haldon 1999a; Brandes 1999; Bouras 2002; Avramea 2001.
- 7 On secular architecture, see Ćurčić 1997. For the economy of Byzantium, see Laiou 2002a; Harvey 1989. On Byzantine warfare and its impact on society, see Haldon 1999b: 234–56. On the army organization and logistics, see Haldon in this volume. For military manuals and strategy, see Sullivan in this volume. The work of Clive Foss in Asia Minor and Anthony Bryer and David Winfield's research in the Pontus are invaluable studies of Byzantine military works: see Foss and Fursdon 1985; Foss 1990; Bryer and Winfield 1985. The *TIB* volumes present an important record of fortification works in their regional context. Archaeological surveys and studies have offered a new understanding of the Byzantine landscape and the role of fortifications: see Gregory 1993; Dunn 1999 and 2006; Crow and Ricci 1997; Sampanopoulou and Xydias 2007. The archaeological study of cities such as Corinth and Amorion provides a solid insight into the role of fortifications in an urban context, see Sanders 2002; Ivison 2007. A series of more recent regional studies in the Balkans and Asia Minor have introduced important new material, see e.g. Moutsopoulos 2004; Milkučić 1996; Popović 1996 and 2006; Giros 2003; Pralong 1988; Tsouris and Brikas 2006. Finally, for discussion of the influential role of Byzantine fortifications on Crusader military architecture, see Winfield 2006.
- 8 Bakirtzis 2005.
- 9 Ousterhout in this volume.
- 10 Bakirtzis and Oreopoulos 2001: 24–47.
- 11 On the regional organization of fortifications in Bithynia, see Giros 2003: 214–24.
- 12 Megaw 1985.
- 13 Toy 1985: 86; Foss and Winfield 1986: 148.
- 14 Vacalopoulos 1972b: 87–109.
- 15 Foss and Winfield 1986: 145–6.
- 16 Karaiskaj 1997.
- 17 Bakirtzis and Ousterhout 2007: 144–59.
- 18 Ćurčić 1997: 41–2.
- 19 Zekos 2006.
- 20 Mazarakis 1997. Also, see Eberhard 1985 for examples from the Cyclades.
- 21 Zekos 1998.
- 22 Theocharides 2001.
- 23 On the Mariana tower, see Theocharides 1997. For the Galatista tower, see Theocharides and Papangelos 1997.

- 24 Crow 1995.
- 25 For the construction of the long wall of Kassandreia see the 1407 chrysobull of John VII Palaiologos, Bompaire 1964: 106. On the Hexamilion, Gregory 1993.
- 26 For Anastasioupolis, Bakirtzis 1994: 164–5; on Christoupolis, see Bakalakis 1938; Tsouris 1998.
- 27 On the debated “decline” of late Roman cities and related research, see Kirsten 1958; Foss 1979; Brandes 1989: 80–131; Haldon 1990: 93–117; Whittow 1990 and 2001; Liebeschuetz 2001: 249–317; Kirilov 2007.
- 28 Müller-Wiener 1986; Dunn 1994.
- 29 Kazhdan 1998a.
- 30 Whittow 1990; Dunn 2006.
- 31 Angold 1985; Ivison 2000; Bouras 2002: 501–14.
- 32 Trojanos 1969; Bartusis 1988 and 1992.
- 33 Brandes 1989: 82–111; for Abdera and Maroneia, see Bakirtzis 1994: 158–64; for Serres, Xyngopoulos 1965a: 1–21; for Veroia, see Papazotos 1994: 37–71; for Vodena, see Stavridou-Zafraha 1995; for Philippi, see Lemerle 1945; for Corinth, see Sanders 2002; for Argos, see Bon 1937: 136–9; for Amorion, see Ivison 2007; for Ankyra, see Foss 1977b; for Sardis, see Foss 1976; for Ephesus and Miletus, see Foss and Winfield 1986: 137–8.
- 34 On Abdera, Bakirtzis 1994: 158–61; Bakirtzis and Ousterhout 2007: 86–143.
- 35 On Kastoria, see Drakopoulou 1997; Foss and Winfield 1986: 19.
- 36 Xyngopoulos 1957; Kalligas 2002.
- 37 Bouras 2002: 506–8.
- 38 Moutsopoulos 2004: 18–47.
- 39 Foss and Winfield 1986: 15–17.
- 40 Crow and Hill 1995; Moutsopoulos 1986.
- 41 Bakirtzis and Ousterhout 2007: 81–4. On the monasteries of Athos, see Theocharides 1996.
- 42 Bouras 2002: 505. On the fortifications of Constantinople, see Meyer-Plath and Schneider 1938–43; Tsangadas 1980. On Thessalonika, see Tafrali 1913; Spieser 1984. On Nicaea, see Schneider and Karnapp 1938; Foss 2004. For Nicomedia, see Foss 1995.
- 43 Crow 2001. In Thessalonika, for example, the more vulnerable lower parts of the western and the eastern land walls were protected by series of projecting triangular bastions, which appear to have been inspired by the fortified bastions of Roman camps.
- 44 Bakirtzis and Oreopoulos 2001.
- 45 On the city’s history, see Vacalopoulos 1972a and 1983; Laiou 2000; Chasiotes 1997.
- 46 See the description of Thessalonika and its hinterland by Kaminiatis, see Böhlig 1973: 5, 7–15. On the geography, the hinterland and the location of Thessalonika, see Spieser 1984; Konstantakopoulou 1996; Bakirtzis 2003: 35–8.
- 47 On the commercial activity of the city, see Kaminiatis’ description, Böhlig 1973: 6–9; Bakirtzis and Ousterhout 2007: 94–5, 110–11.
- 48 On the fortifications of Thessalonika, see Tafrali 1913; Gounares 1976; Spieser 1984 and 1999; Fountoukou 1985; Velenis 1998; Bakirtzis 2005.
- 49 Spieser 1984: 59–77; Velenis 1998: 107–24.
- 50 Spieser 1973: 151–2, no. 3.
- 51 Velenis 1998: 107–11; Crow 2001: 93–8.
- 52 Papageorgiou 1911: 168; Bakirtzis 1977: 265, 268.
- 53 Velenis 1998: 107–35. An important project was the construction of the sea walls after the earthquakes of 620–30, see Bakirtzis 1975; Spieser 1981.
- 54 Velenis 1998: 133; Spieser 1999: 564; Bakirtzis 2003: 43.
- 55 Bouras 2002: 505–6.
- 56 Ćurčić 2001.
- 57 On the Heptapyrgion, see Tsanana 2001.
- 58 Böhlig 1973: 8, 1–3.
- 59 Soteriou and Soteriou 1952: 193–4, pls 63–4.
- 60 Fortifications are used as the background in six more mosaics in the church dating after 630, see Soteriou and Soteriou 1952: 189–99, pls 62–70.
- 61 Kostantakopoulou 1996: 15–45.
- 62 Lemerle 1979b: 51, 14–15; Konstantakopoulou 1996: 17–18.

- 63 Spieser 1973: 154–5, no. 5. The latter inscription speaks of the renovation of a tower from the south-western corner of the city's enclosure, see Marki 1982: 144–7.
- 64 Spieser 1973: 162–3, no. 12.
- 65 Böhlig 1973: 17–22.
- 66 Böhlig 1973: 23–35.
- 67 Dübner 1864–90: 9, 686; Kyriakides 1937.
- 68 Theocharides 1980: 258–77.
- 69 Tafrali 1913: 44; Theocharides 1980: 262–3. On Basil II, see Stephenson 2003; Holmes 2005.
- 70 Kountouras 1983: 40; Spieser 1973: 165–6, nos 16 and 29; Oikonomides 1998–9.
- 71 Papazotos 1985–6.
- 72 On the siege of 1185, see the description of Bishop Eustathios of Thessalonika, Kyriakides 1961. Also, Vacalopoulos 1983: 118–25. On the Norman invasion, see Stephenson 2000: 284–88; on Manuel I's foreign policies, see Magdalino 1993: 41–98.
- 73 Spieser 1973: 170, no. 23; Tafrali 1913: 46; Papazotos 1997: 32.
- 74 Ivison 2000: 18–25; Bakirtzis 2005: 21–9.
- 75 Spieser 1973: 175–6, no. 28.
- 76 Spieser 1973: 176–7, no. 29; in Velenis 1994: 271–2.
- 77 Bakirtzis 2003: 41.
- 78 Bakirtzis 2005: 21.
- 79 Böhlig 1973: 25.
- 80 Lietzmann 1929: II, 26.
- 81 On spolia in fortifications, see Greenhalgh 1999.
- 82 Tafrali 1913: pl. XV, 1. This is the same tower where the 862 inscription of Marinos and Kakikis was discovered. For the tower's building history and the Vardariou fort, see Marki 1982.
- 83 Greenhalgh 1999: 845–907; Bakirtzis 2005: 17–21.
- 84 For the walls of Nicaea, see Foss 2004. For Ankara, see Foss 1977b: 79–86. For Amastris, see Crow and Hill 1995: 255–60.
- 85 Theophanes Continuatus 1838: 130, 16–17.
- 86 Saradi 1995b; Bakirtzis 2005: 27–9.
- 87 Foss 1996: 132–3, 144–5, 174–5; Saradi 1995b: 45–6. On Choniates, see van Dieten 1975: 434, 13 and 287, 16–17.
- 88 Maguire 1993–4.
- 89 Bakalakis 1953.
- 90 A similar example comes from Constantinople, see Van Millingen 1899: 100; Ivison 2000: 24.
- 91 Bakirtzis and Oreopoulos 2001: 61–8.
- 92 Lemerle 1979b: 136; Konstantakopoulou 1996: 17–18.
- 93 Bakirtzis 2003: 35–8.
- 94 Laourdas 1955; Dennis 1960; Barker 2003: 22–3.
- 95 Laourdas 1955: 295. Also see Dennis 1960: 80–4, for a summary of Manuel's speech.
- 96 Vacalopoulos 1969: 37; Theocharides 1980: 383–4.
- 97 On the civil wars between Andronikos II and Andronikos III and the latter's reign, see Nicol 1993: 151–84.
- 98 Theocharides 1980: 380–3.
- 99 Vacalopoulos 1969: 35–8.
- 100 Schopen 1828–32: I, 541–2.
- 101 Tourta 1997.
- 102 Schopen 1828–32: 541–2, 3; 136.
- 103 Dunn 1999.
- 104 Bartusis 1992: 302–5; Pattenden 1983.
- 105 On Chortiates, see Manoledakis 2007; Bakalakis 1953–5.
- 106 This vulnerability was also mentioned by Kameiniates, Böhlig 1973: 5, 2–3.
- 107 Tafel 1839: 252–4; Vacalopoulos 1939: 203–4, 208–9; Manoledakis 2007: 112–14.
- 108 Manoledakis 2007: 109–27; Vacalopoulos 1939; Nikonanos 1973.
- 109 Lefort 2002; Smyrlis 2006.
- 110 Bakirtzis and Oreopoulos 2001: 81–5; Tsouris and Brikas 2006: 187–90.

- 111 Bartusis 1992: 314–21. On the historical role of the monastery of Prodromos on Mt Menoikeion, Bakirtzis 2006: 22–84.
- 112 John Vatatzes' control of Macedonia and Thessalonika was based on the control of fortified towns and fortresses in the broader region around the city, see Theocharides, 1980: 341–8.
- 113 On Basil's military activities in Macedonia, see Theocharides 1980: 266–77; for wars against the Bulgars, Stephenson 2003: 11–31.
- 114 Kravari 1989: 35–8. Also, Marki 1993, on an important inscription on the fortress of Mylovo in Pieria. See Moutsopoulos 2004: 48–105, on the archaeology of the fortresses of Longas, Setinas and Bozigrad in western Macedonia.
- 115 Manuel II tried hard to sustain the defense of the city's hinterland, Vacalopoulos 1969: 25–8, 34–5.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

IMPERIAL OUTLIERS

Building and decorative works in the borderlands and beyond



Jonathan Shepard

That Byzantine emperors occasionally sent craftsmen, builders and decorators to build or embellish monumental structures for the use of other regimes is known well enough. The ambivalence of this grand gesture is consistent with the “principles and methods” of Byzantine diplomacy, an underlying assumption that other peoples were, ultimately, indebted to the emperor. Grants of money, luxury goods, court titles together with vestments or other emblems of rank, and even of dominion over portions of territory, could be passed off as acts of sovereignty, displaying imperial *philanthropia* for all the world to see. That the recipients were apt to see things rather differently, as tribute, payment of respects or recognition as heads of legitimately separate regimes, was, from the Constantinopolitan perspective, neither here nor there.¹ “Ignorance” was, after all, characteristic of barbarians, and outsiders’ misinterpretations of the emperor’s largesse were unlikely to carry conviction within the City’s walls; besides, the resultant monuments in faraway places might betoken the emperor’s cultural centrality in the eyes of some beholders.

Even so, when externally based writers recorded the emperor’s despatch of craftsmen and their subsequent activities in any detail, a decidedly un-imperial view of things tended to emerge. A striking example comes from Muslim accounts of the emperor’s response to Caliph al-Walid’s request for craftsmen around AD 707. They treat his despatch of craftsmen and mosaic-cubes as a form of compliance. The mosaics exemplifying Byzantine handiwork in the main mosque at Damascus and in Madina were testimony to the superiority of Islam and its vision of Paradise’s gardens, in Umayyad eyes.² The buildings were companion pieces to the Dome of the Rock raised in Jerusalem a few years earlier and furnished with triumphant, eschatological inscriptions citing the Qur’an.³ From this perspective, the “Greeks” were meekly supplying building blocks to reinforce and exalt the true religion as revealed by God to Muhammad.

The contrast between emperors’ and outsiders’ interpretations of the despatch of craftsmen and decorators and their divergent “readings” of the finished products will not be presented in detail. We shall rather survey some of the building and decorative enterprises that seem to have been sent out from Byzantium between the eighth and the twelfth centuries, viewing them against the background of Justinian’s works.

Hitherto, these building projects have usually been discussed in isolation from one another. This approach is understandable, given the medley of societies in play, the diversity of their historical contexts and the deficiencies of the written sources. The latter are, mostly, non-Byzantine. Byzantine court-writings seldom, if ever, celebrated the despatch of builders to external potentates, however much these actions may have been “spun” in oral propaganda of the day as generous gestures towards barbarians. In the case of missions that have left material traces, it is often hard to distinguish the handiwork of Byzantine craftsmen from that of locals, especially as the latter may have been trained by the Byzantines. This holds true even of quite well-preserved buildings such as St Sophia at Kiev, in default of explicit statements in contemporary sources about the contribution of Greek craftsmen.⁴

Before embarking on our survey, we may note a simple point about Byzantine technical missions beyond the borders: the initiative generally sprang from outsiders. And we may propose a comparative anthropological perspective in partial explanation of this pattern. Political elites occupying former Roman provinces had reason to try to impress the legitimacy of their ascendancy upon newly subjected populations through evoking Roman rites of rulership and authority symbols. And masonry works built and embellished in monumental style presupposed recondite skills, a cut above those barbarian chiefs who flaunted imperial-looking vestments or laid on Roman-like triumphal processions and reception ceremonies without too much difficulty.⁵ Hence the zeal of perhaps the most accomplished of all barbarians, Theoderic, Ostrogothic master of Italy, for construction work in stone and mosaic decorations. His palace – “divine house” – at Ravenna evoked the emperor’s, replete with a main entrance named after the Chalke and a church dedicated to Christ, like the palace chapel near the Great Palace’s vestibule.⁶

Yet requests for the emperor to send building teams came in from far beyond former Roman provinces, not just from barbarians mindful of both imperial monuments and subject-populations on their doorstep. Such requests are thrown into relief by anthropological data from pre-industrial extra-European societies. It seems that in many “acquisitional” societies, emergent elites seek to show off their status and consolidate local hegemony through appropriating particular types of luxury goods and authority symbols from faraway “centres-out-there.” Such a centre typically lies at a cosmological juncture, where various dimensions of the outside – heavenly “up-there,” ancestral and underworld – converge: “because of this conjunction it is a place where ritual can bring the gods into contact with humans,” a belief the centre’s inhabitants share and generally foster.⁷ Finely crafted, non-functional goods emanating from such a “superordinate” centre bespeak outstanding status: their possessor gains something of the extraordinary, God-given powers put into their creation. Byzantine diplomacy’s apparent complaisance in dispensing luxury goods, created with unfathomable skills and therefore supernaturally “charged,” to barbarians turns out to have been quite finely calibrated.⁸ The recipients were, with their appetite for gifts, implicitly deferring to Constantinople’s sublime centrality, while imperial exclusiveness could be upheld through refusing requests for military technology, silks and other finely wrought textiles and artefacts.⁹

In “acquisitional” societies harbouring such beliefs, a leader might aim for more than portable, redistributable, items of craftsmanship, and hope to “mark his territory” in well-worked stone or other feats of skilled crafting emanating ultimately

from “up-there.” While tapping Byzantine know-how and visual vocabulary, he could aspire to his own direct line of access to heavenly powers. Through such appropriation, he might create a focus of veneration and worship, demonstrable to subject-populations and visitors largely on his own terms, an abidingly sacral centre rather than merely the family seat. Yet technical aid from the emperor was indispensable for getting this process under way. This is most obviously so with rulers who adopted Byzantium’s rhythms of worship, as Prince Vladimir of Rus did. He was responsible for a large church of newfangled brick and stone, dedicated to the Mother of God and drawing on the design of the church of the Pharos in Constantinople’s palace complex. Vladimir and picked retainers resided in adjoining halls that had likewise been constructed by “masters from the Greeks,” and decorated with frescoes and mosaics.¹⁰

In the 1040s Vladimir’s son and eventual heir Iaroslav sought to show off and commemorate his privileged access to celestial powers through constructing, with Byzantine help, a church bearing the same politically charged dedication as that of Constantinople’s main church, Hagia Sophia (Greek for “Holy Wisdom”). To eastern Christian ways of thinking, possession of Holy Wisdom was closely associated with rightly guided leadership, and the concept was expressed in various ways. Architecture was fraught with significance: Holy Wisdom – the Word of God – was supposedly lodged in (as well as symbolized by) churches with that dedication, while the Mother of God, having brought forth the Word in flesh, could herself be deemed a church.¹¹ On the west wall of Kiev’s St Sophia, Iaroslav with his wife were depicted standing before Christ, while their sons and daughters lined the north and south walls, and a mosaic Mother of God in prayer looked down from the apse’s conch. Thus with Byzantine technical aid the special relationship between Christ and Iaroslav and his offspring was wondrously displayed in Rus’ cathedral church.¹² At the same time the plethora of cupolas topping it offered a kind of counterpoint to the great dome of Constantinople’s St Sophia. The overall design combined a contemporary Byzantine cross-in-square plan with galleries and other features of grandiose “central-type churches built in Constantinople in Justinian’s era.”¹³ The “Golden Gates” in the southern part of the town walls implied that the whole ensemble amounted to a sacred place, like Constantinople¹⁴ and, ultimately, Jerusalem, which also had Golden Gates. Kiev, like Constantinople, was entrusted to the Mother of God, “ready protectress of Christians.” So, at least, the Rus metropolitan Ilarion declared in the mid-eleventh century.¹⁵ In simultaneously taking cognizance of Constantinople’s landmarks and appropriating them, Iaroslav showed the ambivalence characteristic of acquisitional leaders towards a superordinate centre.¹⁶ The *Rus Primary Chronicle* ascribes Vladimir’s choice of the Byzantine brand of Christianity partly to the “beauty” of what his emissaries beheld in “the church” (St Sophia) where the patriarch conducted a service at the emperor’s behest: they reported back to Vladimir, “we only know that there God dwells among men, and that their service is better than that of all other lands.”¹⁷

That a church commissioned by Justinian made such an impact some 400 years later is not wholly fortuitous. An ambitious external potentate like Theoderic had indeed presumed to simulate the emperor’s “divine house” well before Justinian’s heyday, and one might suppose that any superordinate centre of substance was liable to this sort of simulation. Yet Justinian contrived for the imperial city a specific

function, suited for all seasons: buildings and decorative works emanating from it were somehow endowed with an aura of divine presence that was, in the eyes of friends and many a foe, unique. The hallmark which seems to have attached to the buildings of the capital from his time on was an asset in Byzantium's diplomatic arsenal which few if any other medieval polities disposed of. Justinian's monumental works of building and decoration marked a deliberate attempt to integrate his regime both with feats of construction, superior technology and piety, and with liturgical invocation of heavenly powers.¹⁸ Under his auspices, building activity was extolled as an exercise in authority, reviving the role of monuments as media for the emperor's omnipresence but placing fresh emphasis upon his all-protective piety. Few monumental inscriptions had named the emperor in the fifth century or even during the reign of Anastasius (491–518), a vigorous promoter of fortification work in the Balkans. Now, sometimes expressly terming Justinian a "lover of building," numerous inscriptions in provincial towns and forts celebrate the same virtues as his wordsmiths in Constantinople.¹⁹ Justinian's outstanding advocate, Prokopios, melded Roman and Christian traditions of encomium, ekphrasis, biography and geographical surveys into what has been termed a "new kind of panegyric."²⁰

In his *Buildings*, Prokopios celebrates the beauty, ingenuity and utility of diverse works, listing water-channels and bridges alongside churches, palaces, statues and mosaics. Some master-builders are named, but unique credit goes to the emperor: the feats of construction and craft embody Justinian's might, access to God and care for Christian people, and he has, in effect, harnessed Roman engineering excellence to the highest cause. Justinian's extensive building works were ambiguous, at once a declaration of worldwide dominance and his custodianship of true religion and a practical means of gearing imperial hegemony to a variety of contingencies with the aid of fortifications. The city of Constantinople was presented as the citadel, complete unto itself and with St Sophia's dome forming an image of the cosmos. Yet the "rhetoric of buildings" also looked outwards, providing for the spiritual needs, material wellbeing and military security of Justinian's subjects. Prokopios, while "Constantinopoliscentric," offered panoramic views of construction work across the empire, including newly regained territories: building work could extend the bounds of empire and faith wider still, as among the Tzani, hitherto inaccessible and pagan in their Caucasian fastnesses.²¹ A direct connection between Constantinople's techno-aesthetic primacy and conversions to the Christian order is made by Paul the Silentiary, another of Justinian's praise-singers. "Dark-skinned visitors" thronging St Sophia were "enchanted" and "bowed their necks before both heavenly and earthly seats of authority," accepting Christianity.²²

Byzantine ideology, at once survivalist and asserting worldwide dominion, was not simply illustrated by fine architecture, works of craftsmanship and concomitant liturgy: it materialized in them.²³ This marriage of technical skills to imperial faith and God-given authority was essentially the achievement of Justinian and his entourage. Justinian's achievement was virtually unrepeatable, and circumstances seldom allowed subsequent emperors to emulate him. But the conception of building and decoration work as an imperial virtue par excellence resonated, as did associations with regeneration and moral cleansing. Thus, Basil I received fulsome praise for his building and rebuilding operations in Constantinople in the *Life* commissioned by his grandson, Constantine VII. Extensive rebuilding work after 1261 signalled

Michael VIII's restoration of Constantinople to imperial status, while around the same time a rival concretized his imperial entitlement in the form of a massive church of St Sophia at Trebizond; while showing quite distinctive, regional, traits, the church's design and prominent marble columns look back to Constantinople.²⁴

The teams of builders and decorators sent out in Justinian's era symbolized long reach, his ability "to produce completely transformed states" and, in the borderlands of Lazica, to "renew . . . the Christian church, which . . . had become unsound."²⁵ They went not only to the Caucasus but also to Yemen: at San'a, a large church was built and adorned with marble-work and mosaics by craftsmen sent from the emperor ("Qaysar").²⁶ There is plainly a link between imperially directed building projects beyond Byzantium's borders and the activities of religious missions, for which the emperor bore special responsibility, substantiating his apostle-like stance. The clearest association between missions, the building of churches and the imperial milieu comes from Rus, and although no primary source states specifically that the government sent out builders, the most capable are likely to have been in imperial employment. In fact, a well-informed contemporary ascribes the building of "many churches" to the Byzantine princess who married Prince Vladimir.²⁷ Subsequently other high-quality craftsmen reached Rus, for example those employed by Metropolitan Ephraim of Pereiaslavl in the 1080s. Besides many churches and other buildings, they erected "a stone bathhouse the like of which had never been before in Rus." Ephraim was Byzantine-born, owed his appointment to imperial circles, and his building feats pointed to the city where stone bathhouses were less of a rarity.²⁸

The craftsmen and mosaicists who showed up at the Kievan Caves monastery some years earlier may have been sent by the imperial government. The monastic source recounting the episode makes great play of a vision the builders experienced in the church of the Mother of God in Blachernae. They were allegedly instructed by "the empress" to build a church for her in Rus, receiving gold for three years' worth of work. Arriving at the Caves monastery, they learnt that "the empress" was in fact the Mother of God, who had announced that she would go and dwell in the new church.²⁹ Thus in the very act of elaborating their own centres of authority and sacrality, the Rus politico-spiritual elite found inspiration in Byzantium. Not that architectural styles followed every change in technique or design there: once the Rus found a Byzantine model matching their needs, they tended to stick with it. The Byzantine builders of the Caves monastery's Assumption church apparently took as principal model not the church of the Mother of God in Blachernae in Constantinople, but churches of ultimately Byzantine stamp raised in Kiev a few years earlier.³⁰ Yet the notion that the Virgin resided in Blachernae remained vibrant, and the Caves monastery's Assumption church did resemble the main – sixth-century – church at Blachernae in one significant detail, having the same width.³¹ In fact the church raised at the Kievan monastery of Klov between 1078 and 1083 (perhaps by these same Byzantine builders) was dedicated specifically to the Mother of God of Blachernae, with plan and design apparently recalling features of the Blachernae complex.³² The cult of the Virgin's Robe in connection with Blachernae would have a lengthy career in Rus, and a sense of cultural origins beholden to "the Greeks" is palpable in the *Rus Primary Chronicle*. For Rus unable to read the *Chronicle* but with eyes to see, monuments such as St Sophia, the Golden Gates or the homelier

profile of the Caves monastery's Assumption church were standing reminders of a "great out-there" as well as "up-there."

No other Byzantine mission became embedded in so vast a political structure as Rus, nor did any prove so adept at providing for markedly changing requirements over time.³³ Yet monumental building and decorative work was part and parcel of the early stages of Byzantine religious missions. Thus, for example, the buildings sponsored by Justinian were not the last Byzantine works in the Caucasus. After the Alan leadership's adoption of Christianity in the mid-tenth century, the Byzantine metropolitan saw to the building of a complex of stone churches replete with fine wall paintings at Nizhnyi Arkhyz. The "most monumental" was his cathedral church.³⁴ The Alans provided contingents for the imperial forces throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Even c. 1301 an emperor supposed he could count on the services of a large group of Alans who had defected from the Nogai Tatars: "he knew that this nation was docile and obedient, very brave and pugnacious."³⁵ Lavishly decorated monuments could serve to commemorate the imperial-ecclesiastical complex at Constantinople as a point of reference, especially when revitalized through such diplomatic devices as maintaining infant children of the prince at court, and perambulating embassies that simulated the imperial court.³⁶ From this perspective, the lavishly decorated monuments put up in the earlier years of religious missions were of lasting value. They served as outliers in faraway regions whose political and dynastic dynamics remained different from Byzantium's.

In effect, then, Justinian's sponsorship of a general "rhetoric of buildings," consummately orchestrating the court, ceremonial and monuments of Constantinople into a miniature of heaven, made his seat look the part of a superordinate centre more than ever before. At the same time Justinian offered provincials and other outsiders a chance to partake of its blessings through a variety of affiliations, superbly crafted buildings among them. This could no more guarantee military success for Justinian's successors than his religious missions could ensure political compliance from their host-regimes. One might even argue that by accentuating the unique access to God of the emperor and his complex of rites and buildings, Justinian made newly emergent powers the more determined to appropriate them, or to obliterate them. Seemingly, Constantinople was the target of a major Arab expedition less than a generation after Muhammad's death.³⁷ Yet through associating Justinian's regime organically with feats of engineering, construction work and techno-aesthetic daring, the workman-like qualities of imperial Rome had been elevated to the status of a heaven-sent gift, products and proof of the emperor's divine vision, and thus emanations from God Himself.³⁸ The rhetorical attribution of the whole building process to the emperor's powers astutely played to Byzantium's abiding strengths and added a facet to its ideology, pinning the ideal of empire more or less uniquely to the city of Constantinople.³⁹ In proclaiming the city's impregnability and parading its access to "up-there," the "rhetoric of buildings" provided scenario and tools for the diplomacy of accommodation which Justinian discreetly mastered.⁴⁰ Besides despatching crafted goods and, occasionally, authority symbols such as crowns, lasting intimations of empire in the form of high-quality masonry and decorative work could occasionally be extended to other regimes.

The despatch of building teams to rival churches or unchristian powers did not fall within Justinian's preferred scheme of things. Yet his identification of building

projects with Christian imperial might proved its worth, as did the panache of his diplomacy in general, in the drastically reduced circumstances Byzantium faced from the seventh century on. It was, as noted above, largely a matter of ambivalence, of different interpretations placed by granters and recipients on gifts, marriage-ties or the emperor's despatch of building teams or mosaic-workers equipped with cubes. Yet there was a further dimension to this ambivalence, of which imperial statesmen were probably well aware. The provision of technical aid, especially of virtually inimitable mosaics,⁴¹ could alert the subjects of the likes of Caliph al-Walid to technical capabilities beyond their ken. Monuments on display at the court of a foreign regime could highlight one aspect, at least, of the emperor's superiority. They might serve as, in effect, appetizers for individuals, families or factions within the political elite, drawing their attention to possible advantages reaped from affiliations, open or covert, with the court on the Bosphorus. Or they might serve as, in effect, *aides-mémoires*, reminding churchmen and others that belonging to the Christian empire on earth was still admirable. In the case of Syria and Palestine this counted for something, since sizeable practising Christian communities persisted, including high-placed individuals who still cared deeply about the religious correctness of the emperor. One such was John of Damascus, who decried Leo III's desecration of icons and deposition of the patriarch: "John, who . . . never set foot on Byzantine soil, attacks the emperor as *his*," in "the tone of a Byzantine churchman."⁴² He considers the emperor's intrusion into issues of ritual and doctrine unwarranted, but takes it for granted that empire matters. Perhaps the contribution of an earlier emperor towards the embellishment of Damascus' Great Mosque was viewed by some Syrian Christians in a negative light. But the mosaics may yet have served as a kind of "visual reminder" of imperial capabilities, supplementing the ancient monuments of Roman rule still looming in major towns. This, at least, was probably part of the rationale for sending craftsmen to the Umayyads, at the very time when prospects for a return of Roman armies to the Levant dimmed almost to vanishing point.

What could be further evidence of Byzantine or Byzantine-trained artists working for an alternative ideological nucleus dates from the same time, the beginning of the eighth century. Naturalistic wall paintings of the highest quality in "Hellenistic" style were executed in churches of the city of Rome. Relations between the emperor, Justinian II, and the papacy were fraught in the aftermath of the Quinisext Council and the paintings could register an imperial *démarche* towards compromise.⁴³ With Rome's leadership as with Damascus', Byzantium was perforce coming to terms with pronounced intransigence, although many still supposed the emperor's writ to run in Rome. The paintings adorning prominent churches such as Santa Maria Antiqua would have represented a kind of "visiting card," reminders of an imperial order still capable of wondrous works and resonating with individual churchmen, elite families or careerists. A generation later, Pope Gregory II still found it politic to call upon the empire's subjects "not to renounce their love and loyalty to the Roman empire."⁴⁴

Such "cards" do not, in contrast, seem to have been left in the territory of the Bulgars, close as their relations were with Justinian II in the early 700s. In return for helping him regain the throne, the Bulgar leader Tervel received many gifts, the title of Caesar and veneration alongside Justinian from the Constantinopolitan populace. Various explanations could be offered for the dearth of evidence for new works of patent Byzantine construction or design in pre-Christian Bulgaria. Perhaps for both

sides such monuments of political respectability would anyway have been, literally, too close to home, and the newcomers opted for a certain cultural distancing.⁴⁵ Thus, on the Byzantine-style seal struck for Tervel, the legend invokes the Mother of God's help for "Tervel Caesar," yet he is shown, presumably by choice, in distinctly un-Roman guise, sporting long flowing tresses and holding a shield upon which a horseman spears a foe.⁴⁶

In contrast, we have firm evidence of technical aid provided to the Khazars. In, most probably, 840 Petronas, a Byzantine expeditionary commander, built a fortress for them at Sarkel on the Lower Don. Petronas resorted to baking bricks on the spot, for want of suitable building-stone. Nonetheless, he and his team designed the rectangular structure with care. The outstanding quality of the brickwork, with stolid corner towers and main- and water-gates, and the ornamentation with sixth-century marble capitals have emerged from excavations.⁴⁷ Byzantine relations with the Khazars were seldom, if ever, tension-free and the background to Petronas' mission is murky.⁴⁸ But the imperial government was understandably more predisposed to create monuments for the Khazars than for the Bulgars. The semi-nomadic Khazars were not occupying territory virtually on Constantinople's doorstep, as the Bulgars were. Their power base lay on the Lower Volga steppes, beyond the territorial limits of the Roman empire even at its height. Conspicuous technical feats on a promontory in the river Don were a form of "showing the flag" in an area of abiding strategic interest to Byzantium. If Byzantino-Khazar relations were largely amicable at the time of Petronas' mission, the Hungarians' irruption into the Black Sea steppes had overturned the status quo only a few years before. Through monumental building work at an important crossing-point, the empire served notice on the newcomers of its own reach in the region, while also holding out prospects of rewards for any Hungarians or other steppe-warriors willing to perform services for it.

That our evidence for eighth- and earlier ninth-century Byzantine building missions in the borderlands and beyond should be scrappy is hardly surprising. This is, after all, an era which can boast few extant architectural monuments, and when the state's resources were limited, if still well-orchestrated.⁴⁹ There is a clear, albeit not symmetrical, correlation between the upswing in construction works of various kinds in Byzantium from around the mid-ninth century on, Byzantium's resumption of sustained military interventionism, and the rather fuller evidence of building and decorative works performed by Byzantines or Byzantine-trained craftsmen beyond the borders. A plethora of building and restoration projects were launched once territories began to be not merely devastated but permanently occupied in the Balkans as in lands lost to the Arabs 300 years before. For example, after John I Tzimiskes expelled the Rus and brought the Lower Danube back beneath imperial rule in 971, he saw to the restoration of early Byzantine fortresses and other buildings along the river. Practicalities counted for much, and the building works formed part of a strategic plan to pre-empt any Rus attempt to return by water. Hence the building of new naval installations on the river-isle of Păcuil lui Soare.⁵⁰ But there was probably also deliberate emphasis on past imperial precedent, on the *basileus'* and his builders' capacity to revive works long ill-tended and lying idle in barbarian hands. In similar vein, Tzimiskes stamped his own identity and ability to call up heavenly powers upon such construction feats as the Bulgarians had achieved. Their capital, Preslav, was renamed Ioannoupolis after him, while the key city

on the Lower Danube where the Rus made their last stand was rechristened Theodoroupolis, in honour of St Theodore, who had been sighted urging on the Byzantine forces there.⁵¹ Meanwhile in northern Syria, a massive hilltop fortress was erected at what is now called Qal'at al-Sahyun, shielding the port of Laodicea but also declaring that imperial rule was back for good.⁵² In Italy, too, a series of new fortification works in outlying areas was accompanied by evocation of the empire's antiquity: the largest new town in Apulia was provocatively named after the city whence the ancient Romans had set forth for Italy, Troia (Troy).⁵³ The empire's heavenly credentials were not neglected, either. Quite soon after Basil II finally subdued the Balkan borderlands, the church at Ohrid was rebuilt as a domed basilica and rededicated to St Sophia, the walls being decorated with frescoes.⁵⁴ The aim was to dignify the seat of the archbishop assigned from Constantinople while also, through the politically charged rededication, affirming the joint presence of "Holy Wisdom" and the emperor.

Earlier eleventh-century emperors were particularly prone to make their presence felt through works of masonry and decorations, in the provinces and beyond. For example, Constantine IX Monomachos funded work on the main church of Chios' Nea Moni: its mosaics pay tribute to him as new Constantine and new Solomon.⁵⁵ He is said by a Latin writer to have sent resources sufficient to rebuild the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, although a Byzantine chronicler credits his predecessors.⁵⁶ Constantine may, in reality, have finished off in 1048 repair-work already well under way in the reign of Caliph al-Hakim, the church's destroyer.⁵⁷ The mosaics adorning the church conveyed a sense of imperial order, Constantine the Great being depicted in the rotunda's drum.⁵⁸ One purpose of all this was patently to project the contemporary emperor's authority onto Jerusalem, as its principal benefactor and protector.

From the 1060s on, building works had to be more functional, as incursions from outsiders intensified, and fortifications in the Balkans and Asia Minor were built or extensively restored.⁵⁹ As in Justinian's day, hasty improvisations were accompanied by bids for the monumental and Manuel I Komnenos proved to be a past master. In attempting to shore up his strategic position *vis-à-vis* the Hungarians and their allies, he used crude materials to improve the defences of fortresses like Braničevo. But a grand manner was still essayed where it would count, as at Belgrade: there, high-quality stonework interspersed with brick bands faced down the Hungarians across the Danube.⁶⁰ In fact the fortification work which Manuel instigated to halt Turkish incursions into western Asia Minor was praised to the skies by court orators. Eustathios of Thessalonika lauded the strategy of "sowing Roman fortresses and cities of armed men across all the land of our opponents," and a story circulated that Manuel himself carried stones on his back in fortifying Dorylaion.⁶¹ Manuel also maintained the tradition of good works in the Holy Land, sending craftsmen and decorators to help restore monasteries and to embellish the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The programme of mosaics Manuel sponsored for the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem signalled his omnipresence as well as munificence, portraying him in several parts of the building, including the sanctuary. These works demonstrated the emperor's qualities of guardianship of orthodoxy and *philanthropia* before the eyes of the Latin masters of Palestine, as well as the eastern Christians still living there.⁶²

Byzantium's unique blend of material wellbeing, feats of arms and massively invoked divine support between the ninth and the eleventh centuries prompted some leaders or lesser members of external elites to seek not only its goods but also its religious rites, God and ethical guidelines. These constitute just one type of response to a superordinate centre. Byzantium also had a good deal to offer societies already harbouring an established monotheistic religion, whether Christian or Muslim. Its craftsmanship remained in demand among them, and antique texts conveying secular data and commentaries were sought after, too. Regimes in the western and central Mediterranean could aim to transform their status and demonstrate access to extraordinary powers with overt techno-aesthetic assistance from Byzantium. Thus the Umayyad rulers of al-Andalus occasionally highlighted their receipt of texts and craftsmen from the emperor, as when 'Abd al-Rahman III raised his status from amir to that of "commander of the faithful" or caliph. Besides establishing a *dar al-Tiraz* ("house of fine textiles") and, apparently, installing Byzantine-trained workers, he received 140 marble columns for building his new palace from the *basileus*, besides nineteen from the realm of the Franks. Byzantine craftsmen also embellished with mosaics the mosque at Cordoba which 'Abd al-Rahman and his son greatly enlarged.⁶³ The primary aim was to set it on a par with the earlier Umayyad mosque built at Damascus and to outshine Fatimid and Abbasid rivals; for feats of outstanding craftsmanship, a Greek connection still appeared to the new caliph invaluable.

The ambitions of Venice's leadership were less sweeping, a combination of self-promotion with going through the motions of deference towards the *basileus*. They literally could not afford to cross the controller of the most lucrative eastern Mediterranean market and still found it politic to receive imperial titles. Under Doge Domenico Contarini *protosebastos* (1043–70) a new church of San Marco was raised in the doge's palace complex. Not merely did its central plan evoke eastern Christian churches: San Marco was, according to an early twelfth-century Venetian source, "a skilful construction entirely similar to . . . [the church] of the Twelve Apostles" in Constantinople.⁶⁴ The latter church, built during Justinian's reign and the capital's second church after St Sophia, had strong imperial associations, being the burial-place of many emperors until 1028. Venice had housed St Mark's body since the ninth century and was now according him a more splendid resting-place than the previous church dedicated to him.⁶⁵ In effect, the doge's palace complex was being equipped not with a St Sophia but with a church accommodating a senior apostle while manifestly recalling a key imperial church in Constantinople. Doges were also entombed in the new church. In appropriating salient attributes of a politically and spiritually charged Constantinopolitan monument, the Venetian leadership was asserting its own legitimacy under heavenly protection. The visual vocabulary of Constantinople was simultaneously saluted and subverted, a common enough approach among the more developed acquisitional societies towards a superordinate centre. The Byzantine government was aware of the building work on San Marco, whose chief architect probably hailed from Constantinople. In fact, the emperor gave twenty pounds of gold for the church each year from 1082 on and, according to later chroniclers, Contarini's successor had a mosaic master brought from Constantinople.⁶⁶ Here, then, is yet another example of the ambivalence of Byzantine high-technical assistance, at once bestowal of benefits *de haut en bas* and provision of means towards self-empowerment.

The construction of San Marco was also an indicator of the mounting wealth of Venice and this reflected a more general upswing in material resources and cultural ambitions beyond Byzantium's western borders in the eleventh century. One gains the impression from our – admittedly fragmentary – sources that secondary-rank figures in the West now found it rather easier to recruit Byzantine workers for grand projects, without recourse to the imperial government. Thus, for instance, c. 1017 Bishop Meinwerk employed "Greek workmen (*operarios*)" for a chapel adjoining the church of the Mother of God at Paderborn.⁶⁷ Precious materials, too, became more available, for example the marble that Abbot Gauzlin of Fleury acquired; in the late 1020s, he also sought a mosaic-worker from *Romania* to adorn the apse vault of his monastery's church.⁶⁸ It is conceivable that such relatively casual activities bolstered the slightly later trend towards multi-domed churches discernible in Aquitaine. That the region enjoyed quite informal contacts with the Byzantine World is suggested by the incidence of dualist beliefs there in the earlier eleventh century, beliefs which Bogomils probably had much to answer for.⁶⁹ Unauthorized forms, architectural as well as religious, were seeping out of the Byzantine World and mutating as they were disseminated.

Such developments amounted, undeniably, to "dilution of the brand." The imperial government's monopolization of technical skills loosened as other societies diversified, and grew wealthier and more accomplished. This could hardly fail to dull the mystique enshrouding the products and the masters of the "God-protected city" of Constantinople; their uniqueness was impaired and so were the leadership's claims of privileged access to supernal powers, at least in the eyes of those who had not received religious "law" from Byzantium. By the mid-twelfth century the adherents of a "nouveau" regime, the Norman kingdom of Sicily, were drawing quite freely on Byzantine political imagery and recruiting mosaicists from, seemingly, the Constantinopolitan milieu to serve their individual agendas. Thus George of Antioch has himself portrayed venerating the Mother of God on a mosaic, while Roger II is being crowned by Christ.⁷⁰ But such dilution is the ultimate fate of super-ordinate centres, as acquisitional societies elaborate their own aesthetic vocabularies and political cultures. And in Byzantium's case the dilution was slow. Not even the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204 or the relatively meagre assortment of crafted goods produced there after Michael VIII's recovery of the city extinguished either its aura of sacrality or the potency of its relics, at least in the eyes of those peoples which had accepted Byzantine Christianity. Thus some of our fullest information about the shrines and relics of Constantinople comes from Rus visitors to the city, writing in the fourteenth century.⁷¹

Responses of outsiders to Constantinople's ensemble of monuments, decorations and ecclesial-imperial rites ranged from piecemeal extraction of relics, *objets d'art* and other items to employing metropolitan craftsmen for specific tasks and on, exceptionally, to bids to evoke the whole ensemble, such as Iaroslav's Kiev, described as "rivalling Constantinople's sceptre."⁷² Such emulation was at its boldest in distant lands, where home-grown conceptions of authority had little, if any, regard for monarchy and where the term *tsar* was used of any godly and mighty ruler, rather than being reserved for Byzantium's *basileus*.⁷³ And one might dismiss the enlisting of Byzantine craftsmen by commissioners of public works in Islamic and western Christian polities in the Mediterranean world as just that: exploitation of Greek

know-how for specific purposes, to the greater glory of the instigators and proprietors of the new monuments, with implications that the *basileus*' skills were now at their service, as for Caliph al-Walid in 707. Yet from the imperial perspective such works might yet serve as (in modern marketing terms) "loss leaders." The Rus had posed a serious threat to Byzantium's northern approaches in the tenth century, as Tzimiskēs' fortifications on the lower Danube attest. Yet within decades these defence-installations were largely decommissioned, while the Rus' conversion to Christianity was enshrined in massive building works at Kiev, foreshadowing Iaroslav's more systematic simulation of "the God-protected" city (above, p. 374). At the very least, this transfer of technical skills alongside priests and texts to Rus served to neutralize a formidable neighbour. The Rus' expedition against Constantinople of 1043 – which took the Byzantines by surprise – did not lastingly reverse the *détente*. While exemplifying the ambivalence inherent in acquisitional powers' relationships with centres, this episode was probably triggered by an unusual pattern of events, involving Iaroslav's retaliation for loss of face at the emperor's hands.⁷⁴ The building complexes then under construction at Kiev effectively acted as "stabilizers" on Byzantium's northern approaches, even while acting as foundation-stones for the Rus princely regime.

The ambivalence of imperial Christian building works is already discernible in Justinian's era, when monuments could simultaneously defend and serve as springboards for *reconquista* or evangelization. In the Mediterranean zone, albeit not to the north of the Black Sea, the empire's potential to rematerialize should never be underestimated, and here the outliers played a role. It is not wholly coincidental that two sites of prominent outliers, Venice and Jerusalem, featured in imperial plans of the late twelfth century, whereby the Byzantines would regain the Palestinian coast-line and have a presence in the Holy Places, relying on alliances with Venice and Saladin.⁷⁵ The schemes came to nothing, like many an imperial undertaking. But Byzantine diplomacy was, ultimately, a holding operation: to this end imperial outliers looked sound enough investments.

NOTES

- 1 Obolensky 1963: 56–8; ODB I: 634; Chrysos 1992.
- 2 al-Tabari 1990: 142; El Cheikh 2004: 57–8.
- 3 Grabar 2006: 90–5, 113–19. On other early inscriptions citing or alluding to the Qur'an: Hoyland 2006: 406–9.
- 4 Lazarev 1966; C. Mango 1986: 182, 184; Ousterhout 1999: 55, 240–1.
- 5 McCormick 1986.
- 6 Johnson 1988: 75, 78–9, 80–7, 91–2, 95–6.
- 7 Helms 1993: 194, 212–15.
- 8 On the "charge" carried by things "transformed" by skilled crafting, especially if acquired from afar: Helms 1993: 18–27, 46–51, 61–87, 179–87, 194–202, 207–8. Extraordinary powers were ascribed by some Byzantines to coins: Maguire 1997d: 1040–4.
- 9 Constantine Porphyrogenetos 1967: 66–71. For the imperial workshops: Dagron 2002: 429–32. The array of crafted goods and other products, creatures and texts dispensed from the imperial court is indicated by e.g. Schreiner 2004; Drocourt 2008: 69–77. Not even the finest goods were necessarily manufactured in the palace complex, and this aggravated official anxieties over "leakage" of both skills and products such as silks dyed with high-grade murex-purple: Lopez 1945; Jacoby 1991/2: 456–8. On gift exchanges between Byzantium and powers possessing comparable technical skills and aesthetic sensibilities, see e.g. Grabar 1997; Jacoby 2004.

- 10 *Povest' Vremennykh Let* 1996: 54–5; *Russian Primary Chronicle* 1953: 119, 120–1; Franklin and Shepard 1996: 164–5.
- 11 Gavrilović 2001; Briusova 2006: 26–34; Rychka 2008: 162–3; Tsamakda 2008: 220–30.
- 12 Lazarev 1966: 36–8, 47–8, 52, 236 and figs 26, 27; Poppe 1981: 38–51 and fig. 6.
- 13 Komech 1987: 209, see also 183–4, 195–6, 230–2; C. Mango 1986: 181–2.
- 14 See Ousterhout in this volume.
- 15 Ilarion 1997: 50; Franklin 1991: 24. See also Rychka 2008: 153–5, 163–5.
- 16 Helms 1993: 204–6.
- 17 *Povest' Vremennykh Let* 1996: 49; *Russian Primary Chronicle* 1953: 110–11.
- 18 Doig 2008: 72–80.
- 19 Feissel 2000: 83 and n. 8, 84–6, 93 and n. 103, 100 and n. 150.
- 20 Elsner 2007: 50.
- 21 Procopius 1940: 206–7, 208–9; Elsner 2007: 47–9; Maas 2007: 78–82.
- 22 Paul the Silentiary 1912: 254–5; Obolensky 1963: 60.
- 23 See Woodfin in this volume.
- 24 *Vita Basilii* 1838: 319–41; Alexander 1962: 349–51; Talbot 1993: 249–55; Eastmond 2004: 27–46, 154–5.
- 25 Procopius 1940: 4–5, 214–15.
- 26 al-Tabari 1999: 220–1.
- 27 Yahya of Antioch 1932: 423.
- 28 *Povest' Vremennykh Let* 1996: 88–9; *Russian Primary Chronicle* 1953: 170.
- 29 *Paterik* 1997: 302–4, 306; Heppell 1989: 6–8, 10.
- 30 Vysotsky 2005: 217. See also C. Mango 1986: 184, 186.
- 31 Vysotsky 2005: 218; see Papacostas in this volume.
- 32 *Paterik* 1997: 310; Heppell 1989: 13, 87; Vysotsky 2005: 217–20, 224.
- 33 Meyendorff 1981.
- 34 Arzhantseva 2002: 20 and figs 2, 3; Beletsky and Vinogradov 2005.
- 35 Pachymeres 1999: IV, 338–9. The emperor's hopes were, however, soon dashed.
- 36 Shepard 2006d; Shepard 2001: 26, 28–9.
- 37 O'Sullivan 2004.
- 38 Elsner 2007: 45–6, 48.
- 39 Alexander 1962: 345–50, 355–6; Webb 1999: 70–1.
- 40 Obolensky 1963.
- 41 Mosaics installed in monumental structures to good effect are likely to have required skilled, costly, craftsmanship, whatever the availability of suitable glass. See James 2006: 40–7.
- 42 Louth 2003: 13–14 (introduction). See also Schick 1995: 85–111, 159–79.
- 43 Nordhagen 1988: 600–9; Brown 2008: 438. The pitfalls of invariably ascribing accomplished naturalistic works to metropolitan artists are stressed by e.g. Brenk 2004. But that the fine mosaics of John VII's Oratory in the Old Basilica of St Peter were executed by Byzantine mosaicists – presumably from the capital – does not seem to be in dispute. Pope John, who commissioned them, was also responsible for naturalistic frescoes in Santa Maria Antiqua, and this may be no coincidence: Nordhagen 1988: 603–4; Nordhagen 1990: 62–77, 93–100, 103–4.
- 44 *Liber pontificalis* 1955, I: 407; Brown 2008: 440–1.
- 45 The question of what can safely be adjudged pre-Christian at the Bulgar capital, Pliska, and elsewhere is anyway uncertain: Henning 2007.
- 46 Zacos and Veglery 1972, III: 1441 no. 2672.
- 47 Constantine Porphyrogenetos 1967: 182–5; Rappoport 1959.
- 48 Noonan 1992: 114, 124, 128–31.
- 49 C. Mango 1986: 89–98; Auzépy 2008.
- 50 Condurachi 1967: 183–7; Stephenson 2000: 57.
- 51 Stephenson 2003: 65.
- 52 Ball 2006: 145–6.
- 53 Martin 1993: 261–2.
- 54 Wharton 1988: 105; Stephenson 2000: 137–8.
- 55 Maguire 1992: 212–14; Ousterhout 1999: 97–8.
- 56 William of Tyre 1986, I: 112–13; Skylitzes 1973: 387–8.

- 57 Pringle 2007: 11–12.
- 58 Ousterhout 1989: 70–2, 78.
- 59 On fortifications generally, see Bakirtzis in this volume.
- 60 Stephenson 2000: 242–3, 245.
- 61 Eustathios 2000: 208; Choniates 1975: 176; Stone 2003: 184, 187, 192–3, 195.
- 62 Hunt 1991: 72–8, 81–5; Pahlitzsch 2001: 206–7; Jotischky 2004: 146–8; Pringle 2007: 30.
- 63 Stern 1976: 22–6, 36–8, 46–7; Holod 1992; Hillenbrand 1994: 443; Ruggles 2000: 60; Fierro 2005: 109.
- 64 *RHC Occ.* 5: 284. See Papacostas and Dale in this volume.
- 65 How far the original, ninth-century, structure affected the layout of the eleventh-century San Marco’s is a “vexed question,” not central to our survey: see Papacostas in this volume.
- 66 Demus 1960: 23–4, 45–50, 74–5, 100; Demus 1984, I: 2 and n. 7 on 309; Buchwald 2000: 40–2.
- 67 *Vita Meinwerchi* 1921: 82.
- 68 Andreas of Fleury 1969: 80, 136.
- 69 Taylor 2005: 87–91, 116–25; Papacostas in this volume.
- 70 Kitzinger 1990: 189–211, 313–18, 242–5 and figs 120–5; Bacile 2004: 44–8.
- 71 Majeska 1984; Shepard forthcoming.
- 72 Adam of Bremen 2000: 254.
- 73 Franklin 1983; Shepard 2007.
- 74 Shepard 1978/9.
- 75 Magdalino 2007b: 94–8, 104–5.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE MEDIEVAL PROGENY OF THE HOLY APOSTLES

Trails of architectural imitation across the Mediterranean



Tassos Papacostas

And thus during the reign of the illustrious doge of the Venetians, Vitale Faliero, the church of the evangelist Mark in Venice, which had been founded by the most noble doge Domenico Contarini, was completed in a skilful construction entirely similar to that of the Twelve Apostles at Constantinople.¹

This is how in the early twelfth century the recently rebuilt church of San Marco was described by a monk at the Venetian monastery of San Nicolò di Lido. His statement provides the clearest contemporary evidence for a direct relationship between the Justinianic church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople and a medieval structure. Modern scholarship has linked the late antique Apostoleion to various churches in Apulia, on Cyprus, and as far west as Aquitaine. In addition, direct links between these medieval monuments, which share the common defining feature of a nave covered by a sequence of domes, have also been postulated. It is these links that the present brief study proposes to investigate in order to establish their nature and to challenge some long-held assumptions. Although not central to medieval architectural history, the issue is of considerable importance because it enables us to explore contacts between Constantinople and regions both within and outside the empire, and to assess the impact of Byzantine architecture beyond the empire's frontiers.

THE HOLY APOSTLES AND SAN MARCO

The first structures on the site of the Holy Apostles, a mausoleum and a cruciform timber-roofed basilica, were erected in the fourth century. The basilica housed the relics of Timothy, Luke and Andrew, translated there in 356–7, setting a precedent that was to be emulated countless times. In the mid-sixth century the basilica was replaced by a vaulted structure and a second mausoleum was added. Throughout these centuries and down to 1028 the complex received the sepulchres of numerous Byzantine emperors. As repository of the most important relics after those of the Passion and privileged venue for imperial burials it combined two of the most symbolically charged functions a shrine could fulfil, ranking second only to the patriarchal

and imperial church of St Sophia. Today virtually nothing remains of the late antique buildings, which were demolished shortly after the Ottoman conquest to make room for the construction of the Fatih Camii.² Nevertheless, the appearance of the sixth-century church has been reconstructed on the basis of a number of texts and surviving or excavated monuments that adopted the same architectural scheme.

Like its fourth-century predecessor, the Justinianic church was a cruciform structure. According to Prokopios the crossing that housed the sanctuary was crowned by a fenestrated dome while four blind domes covered the cross arms which were furnished with colonnades (and thus aisles) on both ground and gallery level. Later on in his account of Justinian's building activities Prokopios states that the contemporary church of St John at Ephesus, also rebuilt over an earlier structure, was very similar in all respects to that dedicated to the Holy Apostles.³ Although he does not describe it in any detail, St John has been excavated and indeed confirms the sixth-century author's testimony. The two churches differ primarily in that at Ephesus there was an apse to the east and an additional domed bay to the west, increasing the number of domes to six.⁴ Like the Constantinopolitan monument, St John also had apostolic connections as it housed what was believed to be the tomb of John the Theologian, and thus became a major pilgrimage shrine.

Further indications concerning the architecture of the Holy Apostles come from a later period and a much more distant area. San Marco in Venice was likened to the Holy Apostles as early as the twelfth century. Like its presumed model, the structure whose construction was initiated under Doge Domenico Contarini, probably in 1063, adopted a cruciform layout with domed bays and colonnades (although not at gallery level). The similarities between the eleventh-century San Marco and the sixth-century Holy Apostles are obvious. It is far less clear whether these were the result of an intention to imitate a prestigious model or were imposed by the earlier church on the site. The architecture of the latter, built shortly after the translation of the relic of St Mark from Alexandria in 829, has been the subject of much debate for a long time and a consensus has yet to emerge; it will continue generating arguments and proposals as long as the archaeological evidence remains fragmentary.⁵ Otto Demus in his magisterial study of the monument left several options open, pointing out the inconclusive nature of the evidence and cautiously suggesting that the ninth-century church may have been a timber-roofed or a vaulted (and domed) cruciform building, parts of which were incorporated within the eleventh-century structure; he also showed that the building campaign that followed the fire of 976 was only a restoration and not a complete rebuilding.⁶ The latter remains one of the few points on which more recent scholarship appears to be in agreement.

In the 1990s a multiplicity of views concerning the architecture of the original church and its relationship to the present structure were put forth. John Warren argued for an idiosyncratic domed cross-in-square nave with atrium and a tripartite sanctuary with large protruding apses, the nave subsequently incorporated within the later structure and constituting its central domed bay. This reconstruction was rejected outright by Rowland Mainstone who, based on observations concerning the masonry in the crypt and the static behaviour of the vaults, does not accept that the present central domed unit may belong to an earlier phase and implies that the church was entirely rebuilt in the eleventh century. Finally Peter Megaw, partly agreeing with Warren and relying primarily on the plan of the crypt and irregularities

in the layout of the central domed unit, tentatively suggested that even more of the original structure survives today within the Contarini church. His reconstruction consists of two domed units, corresponding to the present central and western bays, with a flat east wall (no apses) and short north and south transepts (without domes) where the domed cross arms now stand.⁷

It is not the aim of this chapter to resolve the vexed question of the ninth-century structure, but rather to address the relationship of San Marco with the Holy Apostles (taken for granted for the eleventh-century church in view of its early attestation), and whether this may go back to the original building on the site.⁸ Did the builders and patrons of the first San Marco have in mind the Constantinopolitan church when they were erecting theirs? And if so, what does this tell us about the Holy Apostles? Mainstone does not propose a reconstruction of the ninth-century building and therefore his argumentation affects the question only to the extent that it lends support to the intentional adoption for the eleventh century. Warren's suggestion would exclude any link with the Holy Apostles in the ninth century. Megaw's, on the contrary, would support an initial intention (truncated cruciform layout with two domes) that was fully realized only with the later reconstruction, more in line with Demus' conclusions.

The question raised by all suggestions is, of course, why the Holy Apostles? What led the rulers of Venice in either the ninth or the eleventh century to select an antiquated architectural model from Constantinople for their principal church? This was after all not a type in use at the time within the empire, and other cases of exported Byzantine architecture in the medieval period show adoption and adaptation of contemporary rather than earlier types (e.g. the early churches of Kiev). The question has been largely answered, at least as far as the eleventh-century church is concerned, with reference to local conditions and politics in Venice, to its relations with Byzantium, and to the obvious apostolic and imperial connections of the Holy Apostles.⁹ Indeed, the Apostoleion continued housing the precious relics translated in the fourth century and the imperial tombs in the two mausolea. But by the time the second San Marco was built it was no longer used for imperial burials, the last having taken place there several decades earlier (Constantine VIII in 1028). The various functions of San Marco and the Holy Apostles overlap only in their apostolic dimension. The Venetian shrine was also a palatine and coronation church, which the Constantinopolitan building obviously was not; the latter, on the other hand, housed the sepulchres of numerous emperors whereas few doges were buried in San Marco. Thus, it may be argued that the funerary function was not deemed as important as the apostolic link, although of course it represented ancient tradition going back to Constantine. Could there be additional factors that affected the selection of the Holy Apostles?

In a seminal study published in 1942 Richard Krautheimer examined the concept of the copy in western medieval architecture as evidenced primarily by Romanesque buildings, which were said in contemporary sources to have been modelled on the rotunda of the Anastasis at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. He concluded that a few elements such as the dedication, a particular measurement, the number of supports or the circular layout sufficed to earn a building the epithet "copy" of the prestigious model and to associate it with the latter in contemporary minds.¹⁰ The close relationship between San Marco and the Holy Apostles is obviously very different from the

paradigm established by Krautheimer. So much so that a relatively minor element has come to play an important role in discussions concerning the fate of the Holy Apostles in the medieval period. The element in question is the appearance of the domes. As we have already noted, in the Justinianic church the central dome was lit while those of the cross arms were blind. At San Marco, on the other hand, all five domes have windows. This has prompted the suggestion that the Constantinopolitan church may have undergone substantial alterations to its superstructure in the medieval period; in other words, that the lit domes of San Marco reflect faithfully those of the Holy Apostles as they appeared in the eleventh century. The evidence, consisting of two descriptions of the church (by Constantine the Rhodian and Nicholas Mesarites) and of twelfth-century manuscript illuminations, is inconclusive.¹¹ A major campaign of reconstruction and redecoration of the Apostoleion in the middle Byzantine period might partly explain the Venetians' predilection for the refurbished apostolic shrine. It nevertheless remains conjectural. Eleventh- and twelfth-century members of the imperial family founded monasteries in which they were eventually laid to rest (Peribleptos, Kosmidion, St George of Mangana, Pantokrator, Kosmosoteira), abandoning a centuries-old tradition of burials in the two mausolea of the Holy Apostles. Had the latter undergone extensive repairs, presumably with imperial patronage, would it be abandoned so quickly?

AQUITAINE

The twelfth-century church of Saint-Front at Périgueux in Aquitaine has been linked to both San Marco and the Holy Apostles (Figures 28.1, 28.2). It is an equally exceptional case insofar as it falls clearly outside Krautheimer's model of medieval imitation. Even the most cursory look at the plan and elevation reveals that it follows rather closely the same model ("San Marco translated into stone" according to Auguste Choisy).¹² Although excessively and arbitrarily restored in the second half of the nineteenth century, its main traits are still easily discernible: the cruciform centralized structure has one dome over each cross arm and an additional dome over the crossing on quadripartite piers but no colonnades or galleries, simplifying even further than San Marco the Holy Apostles scheme. Originally the church was entered through the eastern wall where later an apse was erected. The peculiar layout was due to the existence of an earlier and smaller timber-roofed basilica on the site (consecrated in 1047); its choir had perhaps been replaced in the eleventh century by a domed bay that was subsequently incorporated within the cruciform structure as its western arm when this was erected after a fire damaged the earlier building in 1120 (the church was finished by 1173).¹³ Under this early choir, and therefore in the present western cross arm, was located the tomb of the shrine's titular saint, venerated in medieval times as the first bishop of the local see and founder of Christianity in Périgord (Figure 28.3). As André Grabar noted, this of course is reminiscent of both the Holy Apostles and especially San Marco, with its role as repository of the relic of a saint associated in the medieval period with the spread of Christianity in the region in Roman times.¹⁴

The architecture and function of Saint-Front, although built using local techniques and initially a monastic church (it only became the city's cathedral in the seventeenth century), leave little doubt about its affiliation. What remains less secure

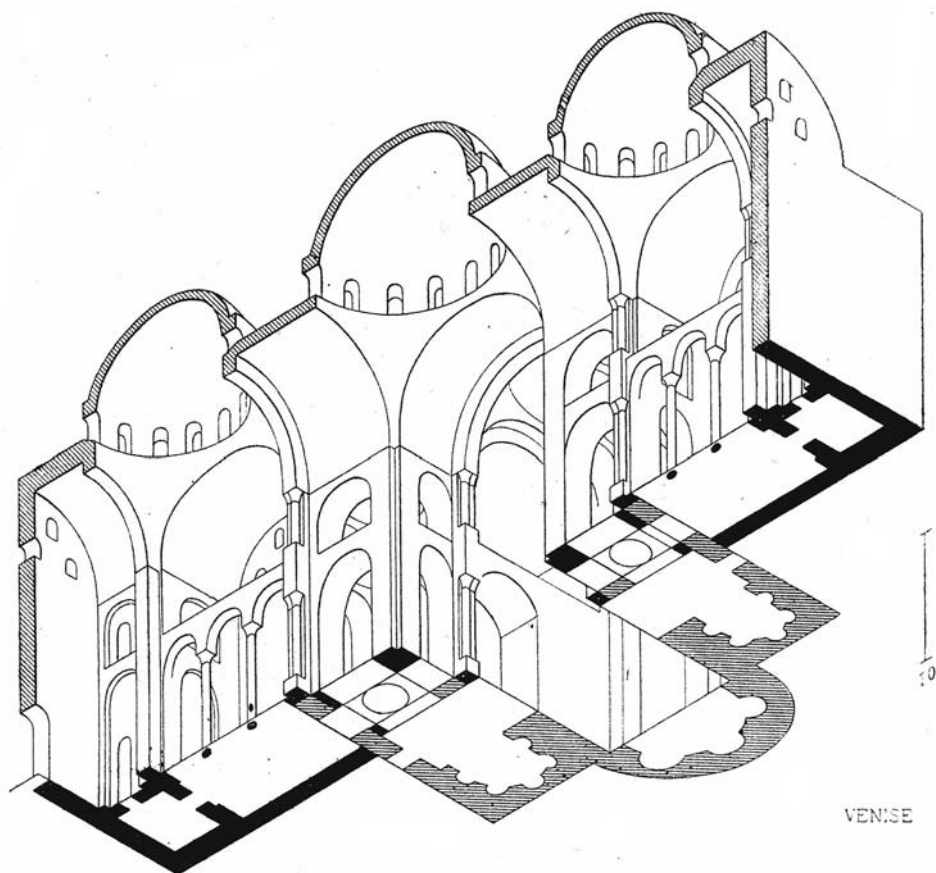


Figure 28.1 San Marco, Venice: isometric section, after Choisy 1899.

is the actual origin of its model: purely Byzantine or filtered through Venice? The arguments for both were put forth as early as the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Although in the case of Venice the familiarity with Constantinople, its shrines and their symbolism that led to the conscious imitation of an especially prestigious model is not particularly surprising, the same cannot be said of distant Périgueux, far removed from the cultural orbit of medieval Byzantium. Indeed, Otto Demus has plausibly argued that the presence of Venetian merchants in southern France in the twelfth century, the movement of pilgrims and the relative proximity of Venice (compared to Constantinople) may go some way in tilting the balance in favour of San Marco, built only a few decades earlier.¹⁶

The importance of Saint-Front, however, extends beyond the importation of an architectural scheme either directly from Byzantium or through Venice, to a much larger group of domed monuments whose architecture has been associated with the Byzantine East. In the region stretching from the Garonne in the south to the Loire in the north no fewer than seventy-seven mostly aisleless churches with naves covered by a series of domes are known to have existed, sixty surviving today in various states of preservation and dating mostly to the twelfth century; half of these are

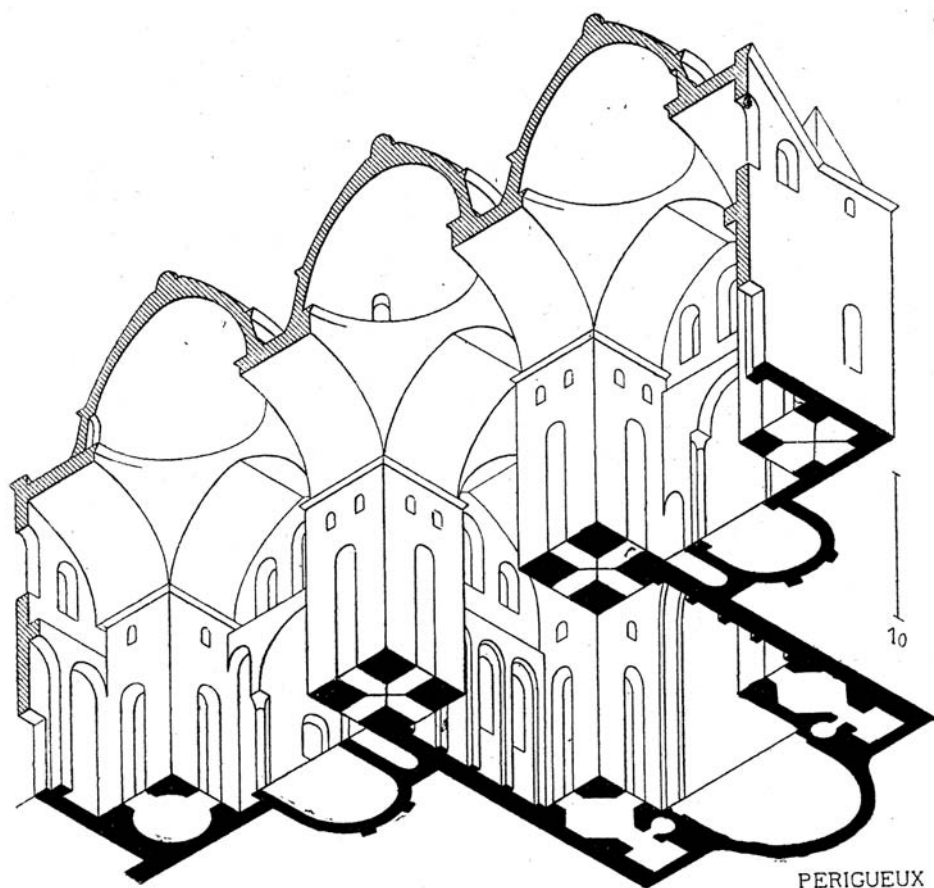


Figure 28.2 Saint-Front, Périgueux, France: isometric section, after Choisy 1899.

located in the Périgord.¹⁷ A lot has been written about the origins of the use of domes in the religious architecture of this large area, the debate having been particularly lively in the early twentieth century.¹⁸ The various arguments revolved around the role played in the formation of this tradition by local building practice and by external input. The imported model reasoning was much favoured and remained largely prevalent throughout the twentieth century. It was prompted by the ostensibly sudden appearance of domed schemes and their subsequent concentration in that particular area of south-western France.

Had the domes of the cruciform church of Saint-Front been the earliest in date (as Félix de Verneilh had suggested), the subsequent proliferation of domed bays could be explained as a result of their introduction in the architecture of an influential pilgrimage shrine. The domed cruciform structure of Saint-Front, however, was clearly not the first instance of their use; the earlier domed choir of the timber-roofed basilica housing the saint's tomb perhaps provided a precedent. So did a number of other churches, all with naves consisting of two or more bays covered by pendentive domes, with lateral walls often articulated by blind arcades and without aisles but

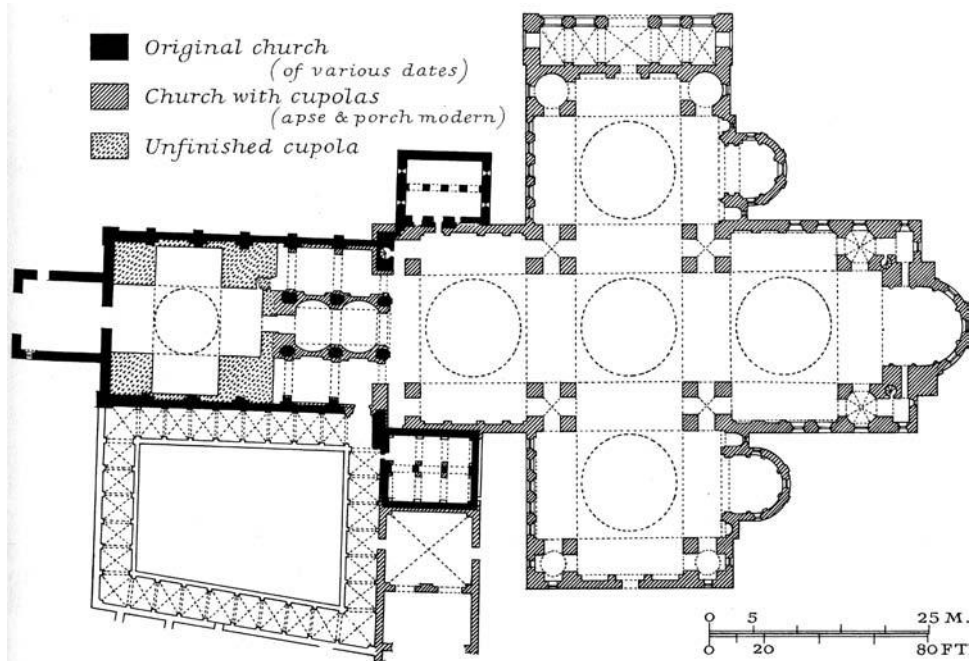


Figure 28.3 Saint-Front, Périgueux, France: ground plan, after Conant 1978.

sometimes with a transept; they all date to either the same period or earlier than Saint-Front. One is situated not far from the great cruciform shrine itself: it is the original cathedral of the town, Saint-Étienne-de-la-Cité. Other prominent examples include Saint-Avit-Sénieur, the cathedral of Saint-Pierre at Angoulême, and the transept churches at the abbeys of Souillac, Solignac and Fontevrault in the Loire valley, the northernmost representative of the type, dedicated by Pope Callixtus in September 1119.¹⁹

One of the most important monuments of the group is the cathedral of Saint-Étienne at Cahors (Figure 28.4). Also consecrated by Callixtus II in July 1119, less than two months before Fontevrault, its nave with two domed bays (the choir is covered by a rib vault) was thought by Raymond Rey to represent the earliest specimen and indeed the prototype of the domed nave in the region as it was attributed to the late eleventh century on account of a sudden increase in recorded donations and of changes in the administrative organization of the local church. The bishop of Cahors, Géraud III de Cardaillac, was responsible for the undertaking.²⁰ He is known to have travelled to the East where he spent three years, visiting first Constantinople together with Bertrand of Toulouse and then the county of Tripoli, returning home in late 1112; he died one year later. A precious relic first attested in the cathedral in 1119, namely a piece of cloth believed to have been used to cover the head of the dead Jesus, is traditionally linked with the bishop's pilgrimage. Camille Enlart, rejecting Raymond Rey's early dating and insisting on the "caractère absolument oriental" of the cathedral, connected its construction with the bishop's journey, suggesting that the domed scheme must have had something to do with the shrines

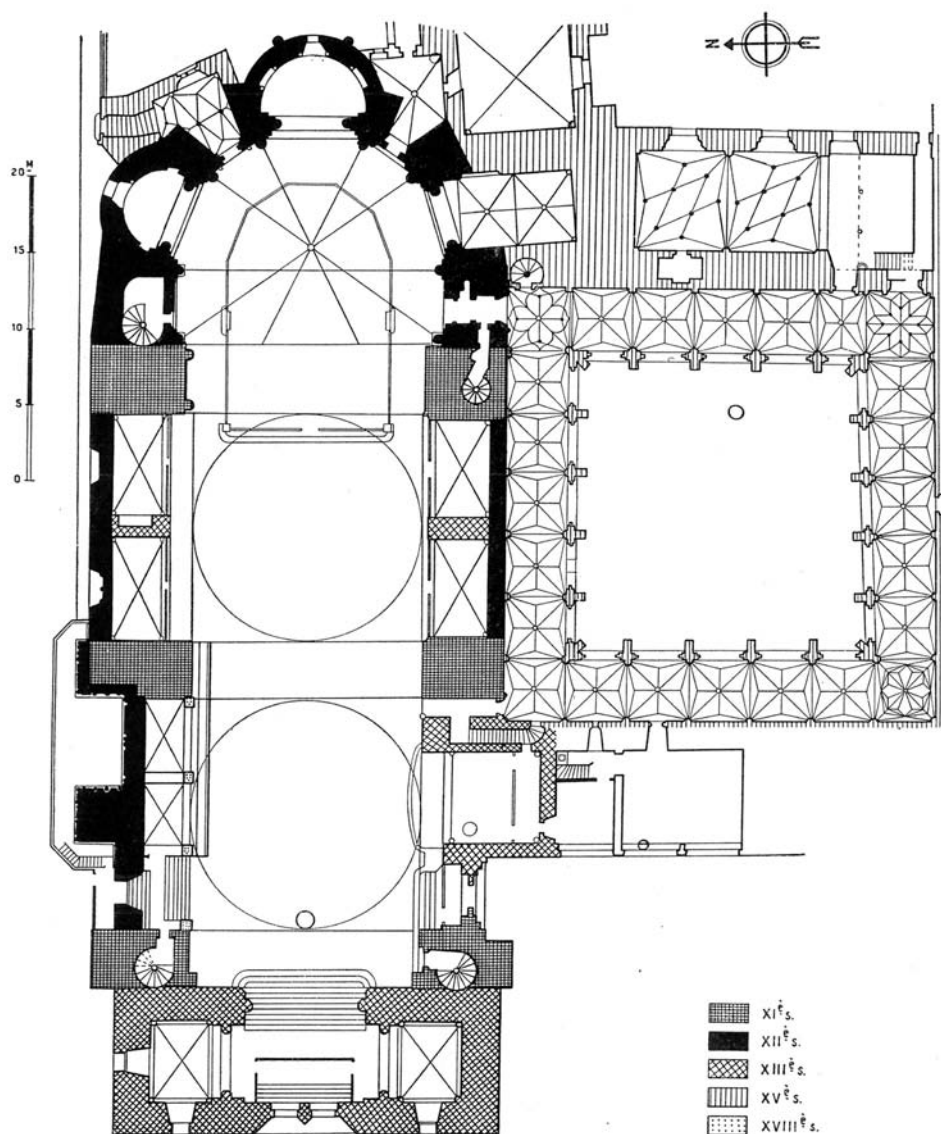


Figure 28.4 Saint-Étienne, Cahors, France: ground plan, after Vidal *et al.* 1969.

visited by de Cardaillac and his entourage. Much more recently Marcel Durliat, broadly agreeing with Enlart's dating, tentatively explained the construction of the church in terms of the religious fervour caused by the arrival of the relic: the apse was begun soon after the bishop's return and was completed by 1119; the construction of the two domed bays of the nave followed.²¹

Enlart went further, casting doubts over the early dating of the other domed churches of Aquitaine and arguing that Cahors remained the prototype for these monuments (although not for Saint-Front, for which he admitted a possible link with

either the Holy Apostles or St John of Ephesus). As we just saw, however, there is little doubt that pendentive domes were already being used in the ecclesiastical architecture of the region before the pilgrimage of Géraud de Cardaillac. More importantly, Enlart proposed a specific group of Byzantine monuments as the ultimate source of inspiration for Cahors and consequently for the other domed churches of the region, namely the multi-domed churches of Cyprus which he first brought to the attention of modern scholarship. This suggestion merits particular attention as it is often cited but rarely scrutinized.²²

First, there is absolutely no evidence that the bishop of Cahors visited the island during his pilgrimage, although of course this is not to be excluded considering that some of the major sea lanes to the Holy Land passed through Cypriot ports. Second, the monuments in question are not situated anywhere near the main ports of call, which in this period were Paphos and Limassol. The principal Cypriot churches that Enlart claims may have influenced the architecture of buildings such as the cathedrals at Cahors and Périgueux and the abbey churches at Souillac and Solignac are St Barnabas outside ancient Salamis near Famagusta on the island's east coast, St Lazaros at Larnaca and the much altered *katholikon* of the nearby monastery of Stavrovouni.²³ Although in later centuries all three are attested as pilgrimage shrines popular with visiting travellers, in the twelfth century neither Famagusta nor Larnaca are known to have been major gateways into the island (this would happen in the later thirteenth century for Famagusta and even later for Larnaca). The five-domed church at inland Peristerona is too remote to be considered in this context, while the related structure at Yeroskepou (discussed below), although near Paphos and therefore presumably more accessible, is not known to have ever been a goal of pilgrimage.

Enlart noted certain similarities between Cahors and domes on Cyprus: their austere character, the pointed arches supporting them, the rectangular piers with plain impostes, the small number of dome windows and the horizontal masonry courses of the pendentives (Figures 28.5, 28.6). But restoration and further research carried out subsequently have revealed that the number of dome windows is in fact large in some of the most important Cypriot multi-domed churches (fourteen at each of the two domes of St Barnabas), and the pointed arches represent later efforts to underpin the original round arches.²⁴ The architectural similarities between these Cypriot and the French churches are superficial, due largely to their common characteristic, namely the domed nave. Aside from the unsurprising differences in building techniques and methods due to local traditions and materials, there is also an obvious difference in scale. The largest Cypriot domes do not exceed 6 metres in diameter (St Barnabas, St Lazaros), whereas those of the main French monuments range from approximately 11 metres at Angoulême and 12 at Saint-Front to 15 at Saint-Étienne-de-la-Cité and 18 at Cahors. Moreover, the lack of aisles in the Aquitanian monuments with their wide naves contrasts sharply with the basilical layout and compact arrangement of those on Cyprus.

The master masons of south-western France did not need the example of Cyprus to inspire them in the construction of their domes, which ultimately stemmed from the local tradition, albeit initially employed for smaller rural buildings.²⁵ Visual contact with early Byzantine domed structures may have encouraged the use of large-scale domes, and the construction of Saint-Front definitely gave further impetus to

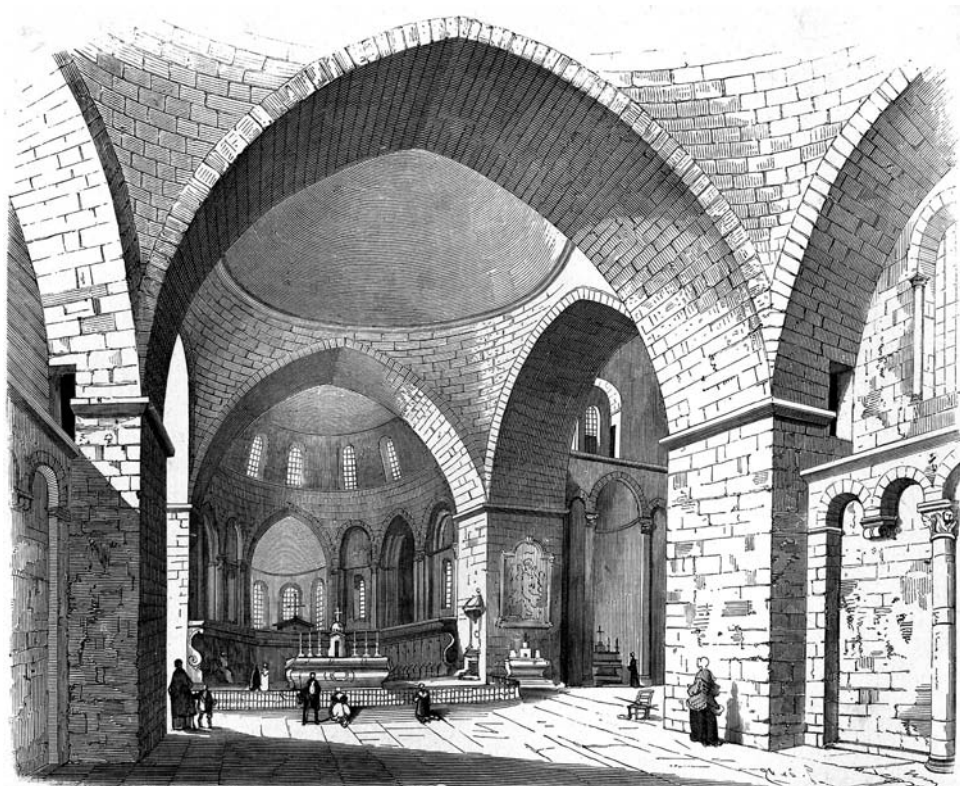


Figure 28.5 Saint-Éloi, Solignac, France: view of the nave, after Verneilh 1851.

this trend. However, it should be stressed that the domed naves of Aquitaine represent only a fraction of the architectural output of the region in this period and that the dome is, after all, nothing more than one vaulting solution among many others. Its spread in this particular area may appear anomalous within the context of Romanesque architecture; but its extensive use may have more to do with the foundation of large churches during this period which, it should be remembered, marks the transition from Romanesque to early Gothic architecture with all that this entails in terms of experimentation in vaulting solutions.

APULIA

A parallel and contemporaneous development with surprisingly analogous effects occurred in Apulia. Here too a cluster of multi-domed churches has been associated with the Byzantine East. Located primarily in the Terra di Bari, its main representatives constitute a much smaller and compact group of half a dozen monuments along the Adriatic coast. The earliest known specimen appears to be the cathedral of San Sabino at Canosa. A much altered transept basilica, it still preserves its nave (with aisles), crossing and transepts covered by a total of five domical vaults (Figure 28.7). The cruciform layout and number of 'domes' have of course prompted comparisons with both San Marco and the Holy Apostles, first discussed by Émile

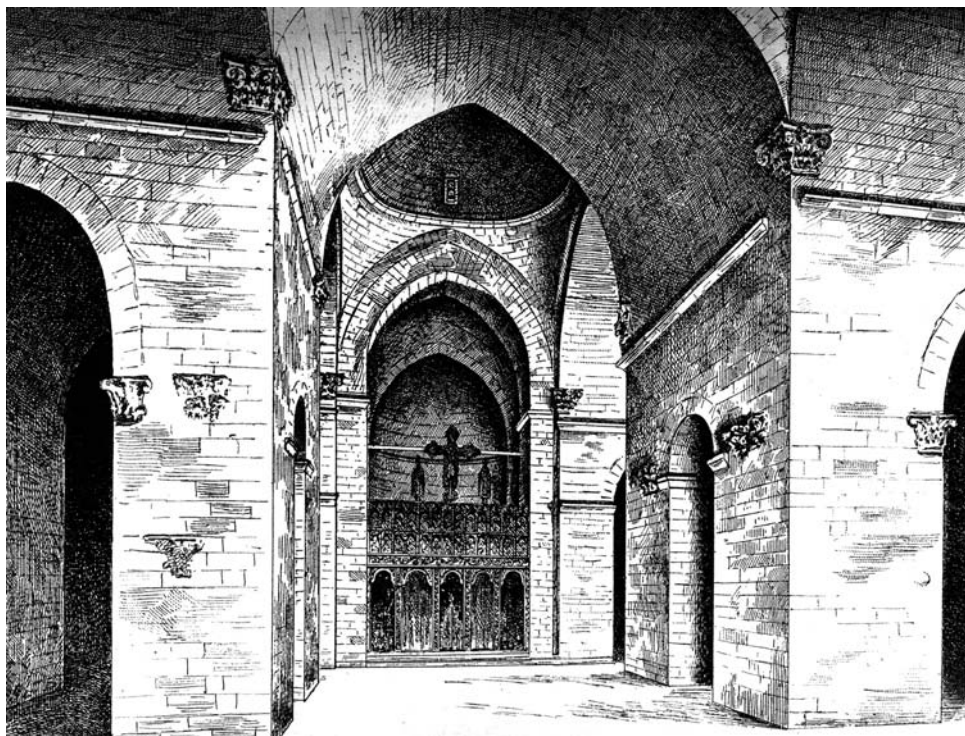


Figure 28.6 St Barnabas, Salamis, Cyprus: view of the nave, after Enlart 1919–24.

Bertaux in his monumental survey of medieval south Italy. Bertaux noted the equally obvious differences between Canosa and the Venetian and Constantinopolitan monuments: the layout with one dome bay for each of the transept arms and the crossing and two for the nave results in a Latin rather than Greek cross plan.²⁶ Moreover at Canosa all five domes are in fact low domical vaults while the aisles are cut off from the spacious nave by a heavy low arcade on piers. The latter feature was used by George Soteriou to compare San Sabino to the five-domed churches of Cyprus (Peristerona and Yeroskepou), and to suggest a direct relationship between them.²⁷ The Cypriot monuments, however, although sharing the number of domes in a cruciform layout, do not have transepts; the lateral domes are lower and merely interrupt the barrel vaults of the aisles (perhaps a later addition at Yeroskepou) while in the interior no cruciform layout is recognizable (Figure 28.8).²⁸ Bertaux, on the other hand, suggested that the layout of San Sabino was perhaps inspired from San Marco, as at the time the Apulian monument was thought to date to the very end of the eleventh century, but also contemplated the possibility that it may have been the Holy Apostles that provided the model. Unlike San Marco and Saint-Front, in this case the copy would conform to Krautheimer's paradigm, as it does not replicate closely its model but merely reproduces its main feature, in this case the five domes.

More recently Annabel Jane Wharton reopened the dossier of San Sabino reassessing both its date and its relationship with Constantinople. She argued for an earlier date, in the middle decades of the eleventh century and thus before the construction

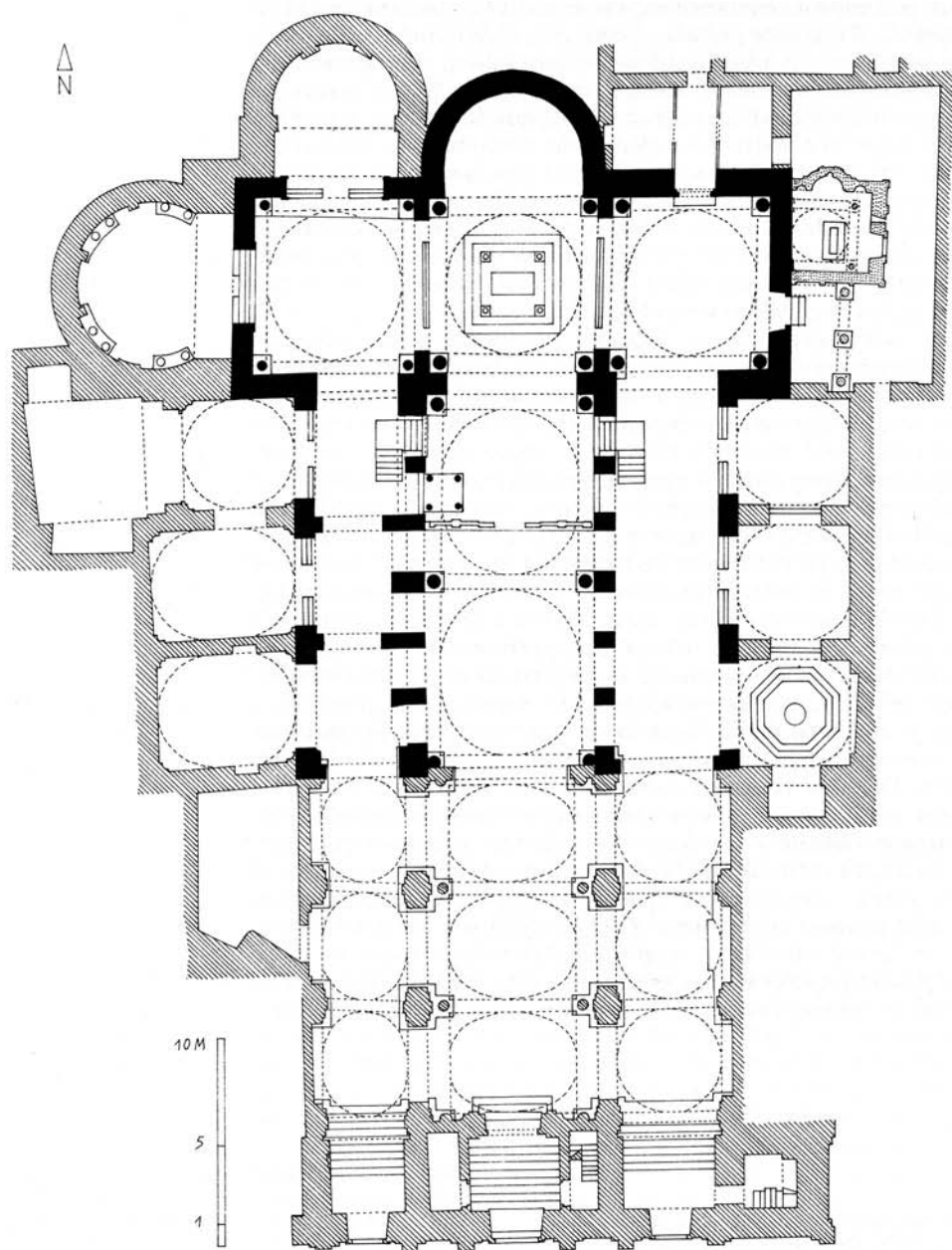


Figure 28.7 San Sabino, Canosa, Italy: ground plan, after Belli d'Elia 1987.

of San Marco, based on the evidence of surviving marble church furnishings and the masonry (alternating brick and ashlar courses).²⁹ As in the case of both San Marco and Saint-Front, the selection of the Holy Apostles model was explained through the apostolic links of the Apulian see. Canosa's first bishop was allegedly Felix, a

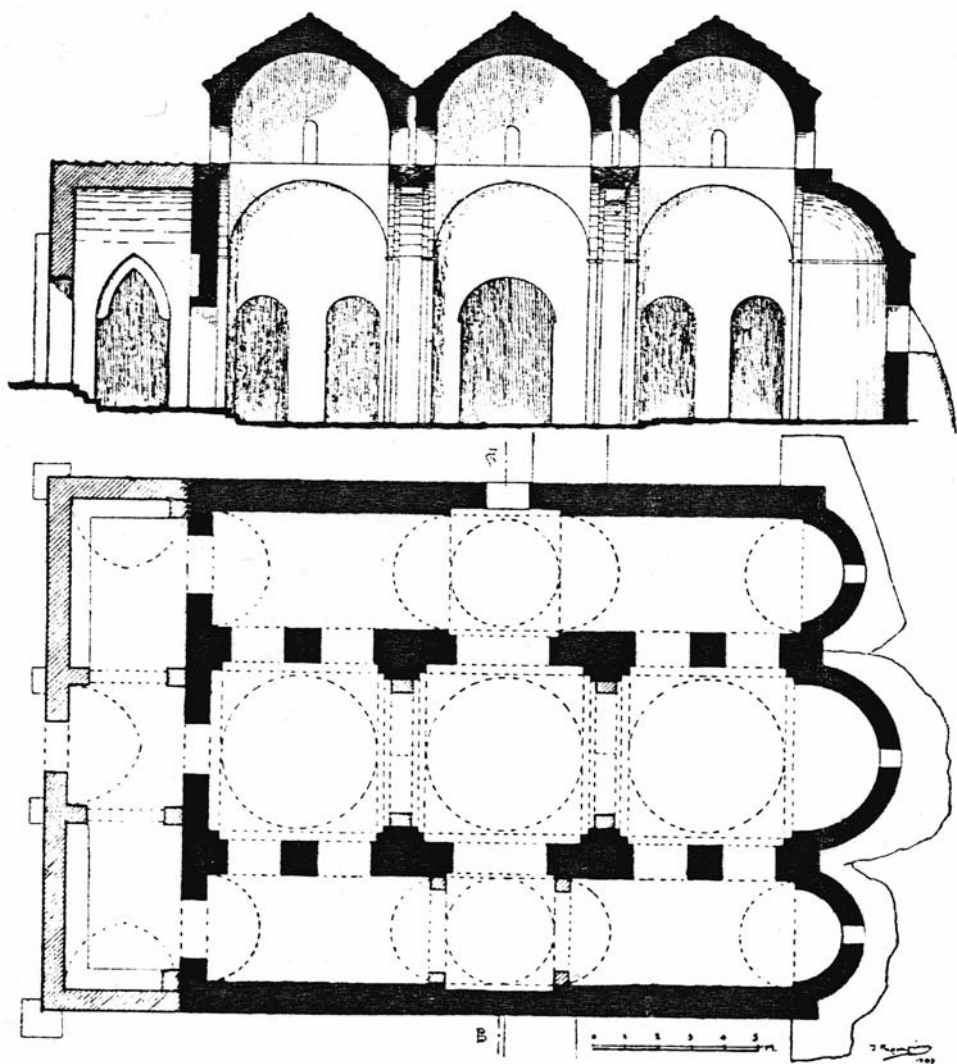


Figure 28.8 SS Barnabas and Hilarion, Peristerona, Cyprus: ground plan and longitudinal section, after Soteriou 1940.

contemporary of St Peter. Another important figure in its early history was Sabinus, the eponymous saint of the cathedral, a sixth-century bishop whose relic was perhaps translated from Canosa to Bari in the ninth century, although his see never admitted its loss.³⁰ Unlike San Marco, in the case of San Sabino there is no contemporary source relating its architecture to its presumed model, and the liberal interpretation of the latter's scheme makes such a connection even more difficult to prove. The arguments presented by Wharton, however, support this scenario. A disparity between the funds available for the construction of the two structures (at Venice and Canosa) may partly account for the differences in the degree of architectural complexity and fidelity to their prototype.

The other multi-domed monuments of Apulia date mostly from the Norman period and do not follow the Canosa scheme. The monastic churches of San Benedetto at Conversano, the Ognissanti of Valenzano and San Francesco at Trani (originally Santissima Trinità), as well as the cathedral of San Corrado at Molfetta, are all three-aisled basilicas without a transept, built in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries (Figure 28.9). Their naves are covered by three pendentive domes (at Molfetta squinch-like niches are inserted between the pendentive zone and the drums of the western and central domes: Figure 28.10) carried on round arches on cruciform piers integrating the narrow aisles into the area of the nave, in sharp contrast to the isolated aisles at Canosa; their aisles are covered by quadrant vaults, abutting most effectively the domes (Figure 28.11).³¹ As in the case of the Aquitanian domed naves, the origin of their Apulian counterparts has also been the subject of considerable debate. Bertaux was the first to suggest a possible link with, yet again, the multi-domed churches of Cyprus. Noting the stone masonry of both groups that differentiates them from the brick architecture of the core provinces of Byzantium and raising the possibility of an Apulian travelling to the island, he nevertheless highlighted their differences, particularly the quadrant aisle vaults and pyramidal dome roofs covered

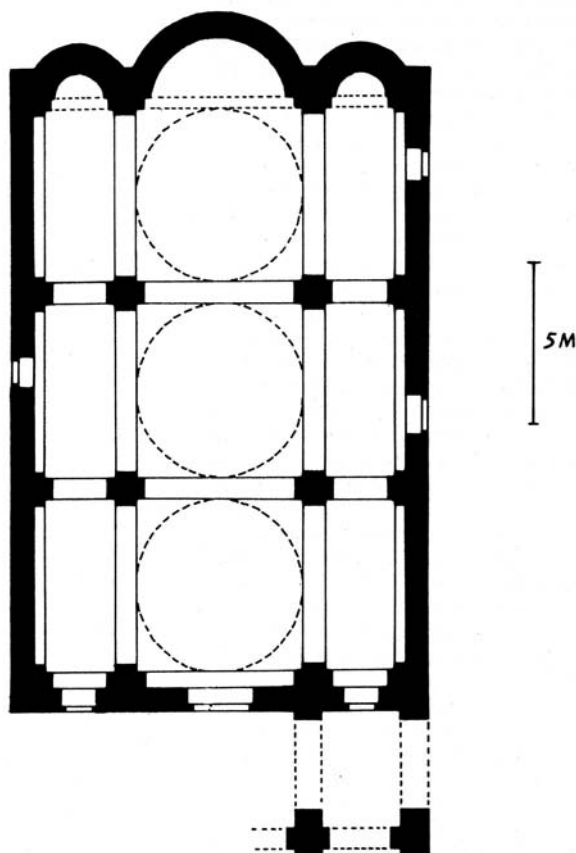


Figure 28.9 Ognissanti, Valenzano, Italy: ground plan, after Belli d'Elia 1987.

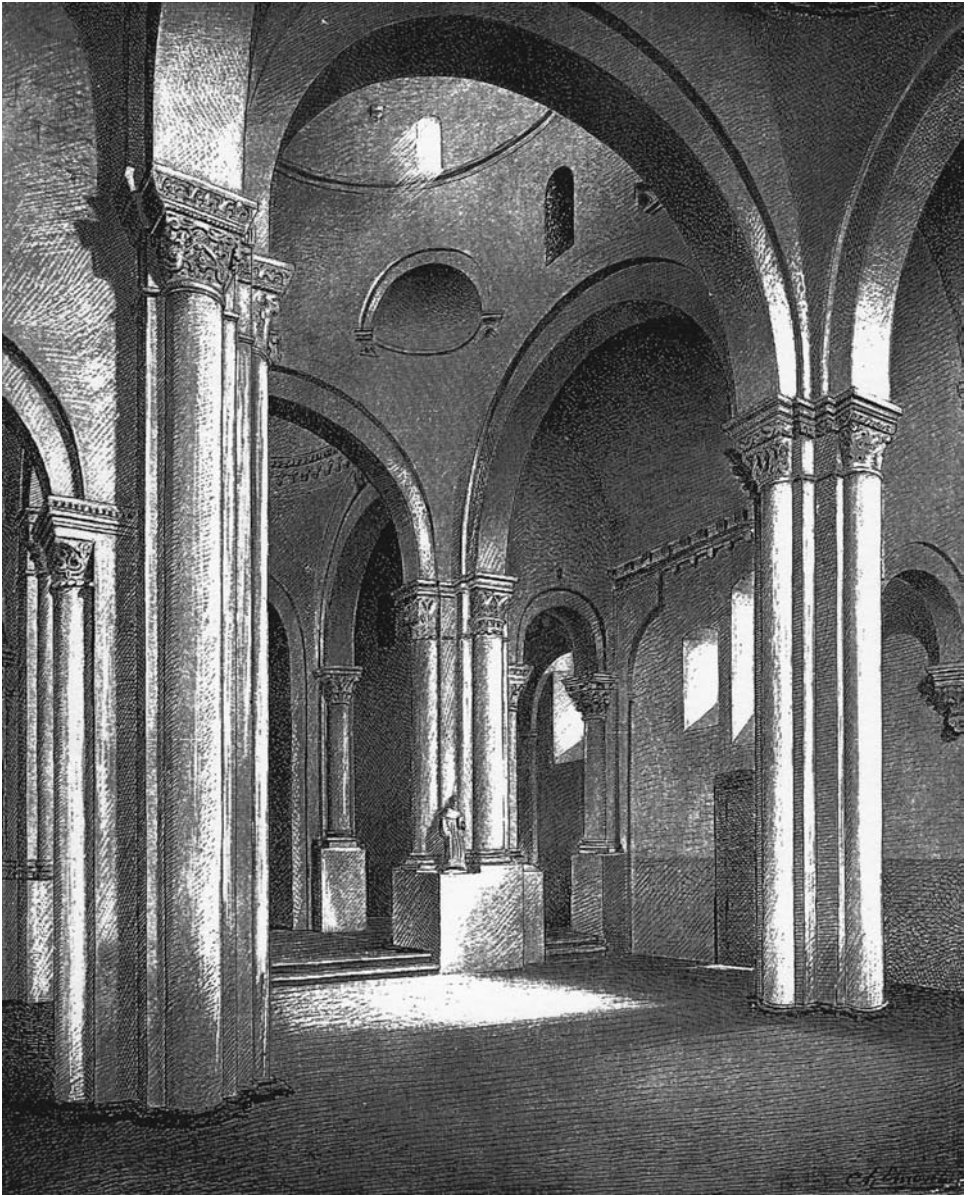


Figure 28.10 San Corrado, Molfetta, Italy: view of the nave, after Bertaux 1904.

with flat stones (*chiancarelle*) in the Apulian monuments. He also stressed the local antecedents, especially in the vernacular architecture of the region with its well-known *trulli*, the structures covered with conical domes built of *chiancarelle*. Three decades later, Grigore Ionescu revisited the argument and proposed a combination of local building traditions with inspiration from Byzantine models, possibly from Cyprus: an Apulian interpretation of the domed nave. Soteriou came to a similar conclusion although he stressed much more the supposedly Cypriot affiliation, which

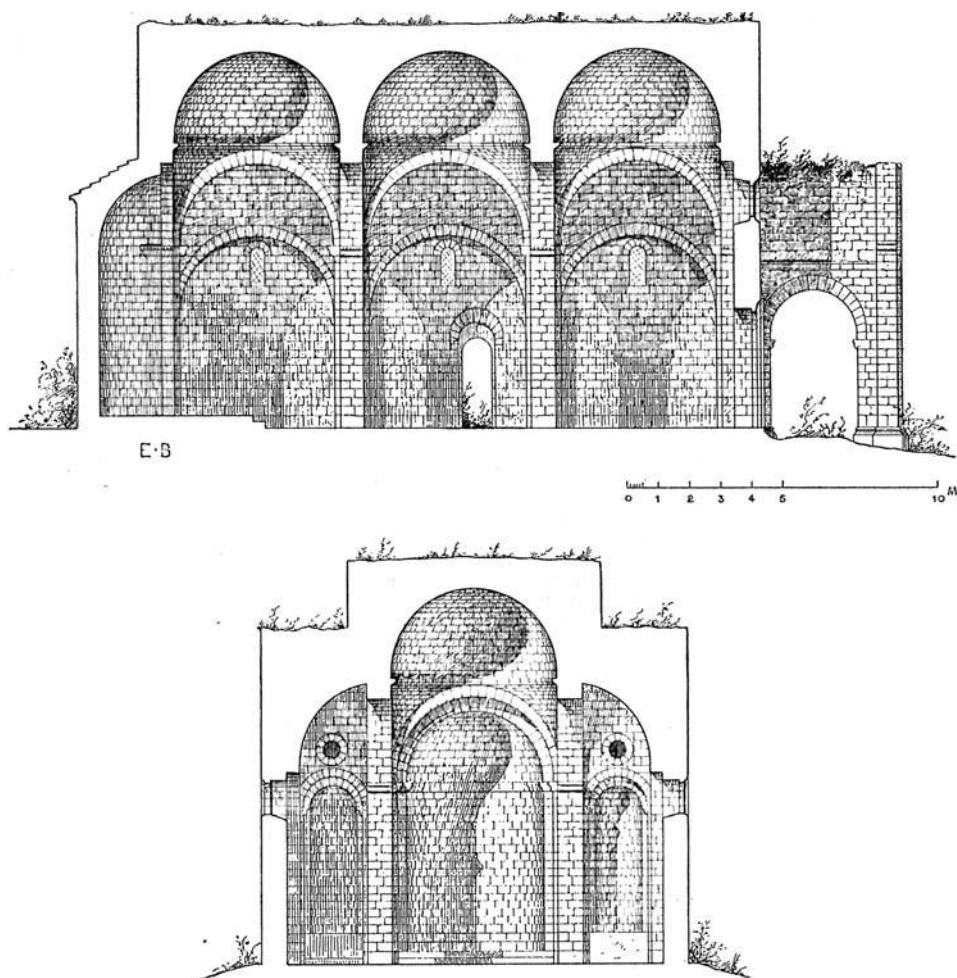


Figure 28.11 Ognissanti, Valenzano, Italy: longitudinal and transversal sections, after Bertaux 1904.

he attributed to an alleged transfer of Greek-speaking populations from Byzantium to south Italy in the medieval period.³²

However, as in the case of Aquitaine, the ecclesiastical architecture of Apulia, as represented by the multi-domed basilicas with the exception of San Sabino, did not require any direct external input to produce this result. The basilical layout was not foreign to the local tradition; nor was the use of domes. The construction of the probably Byzantine-inspired Canosa cathedral in the mid-eleventh century may have introduced the concept of a dome-covered nave, a concept that entered the local building tradition and was subsequently employed in these smaller basilicas. An example dated to the period following the construction of San Sabino shows that there was indeed considerable experimentation with the early use of domed bays: at the now ruined Santa Maria di Càlena, on Monte Gargano to the north of the region where the monuments mentioned above were built, the original unfinished nave

consisted of two bays with domical vaults, similar in form but much smaller than those at Canosa, flanked by quadrant-vaulted aisles.³³

CYPRUS

The monuments of distant Cyprus cannot be held responsible for the domed naves of either the Aquitanian or Apulian churches. Like the latter, they constitute a small but far from homogeneous group. Their chronology is anything but settled and deserves a separate study.³⁴ For the purposes of the present discussion it will suffice to point out that they are almost certainly either contemporaneous or earlier than the two western groups, the latest specimen (Peristerona) probably dating to the eleventh or the first half of the twelfth century. St Barnabas at Salamis and St Lazaros at Larnaca, although basilical in plan, present an elevation of juxtaposed domed cross-in-square units on heavy piers that clearly distinguishes them from the Apulian and Aquitanian structures; the illusion of a nave flanked by aisles fostered by the ground plan is eschewed (Figures 28.6, 28.12). Their layout was at least partly conditioned by the earlier buildings which they replaced: the column basilica that stood at St Barnabas in late antique times is attested archaeologically, while at St Lazaros there is some evidence for earlier structures of uncertain function. Thus, their departure from the norms prevailing in the ecclesiastical architecture of the island in middle Byzantine times (domed centralized schemes with, admittedly, an often longitudinal bias) can be largely explained through practical considerations. What is more, in the case of St Barnabas it appears that the multi-domed nave vaulting perhaps replaced an

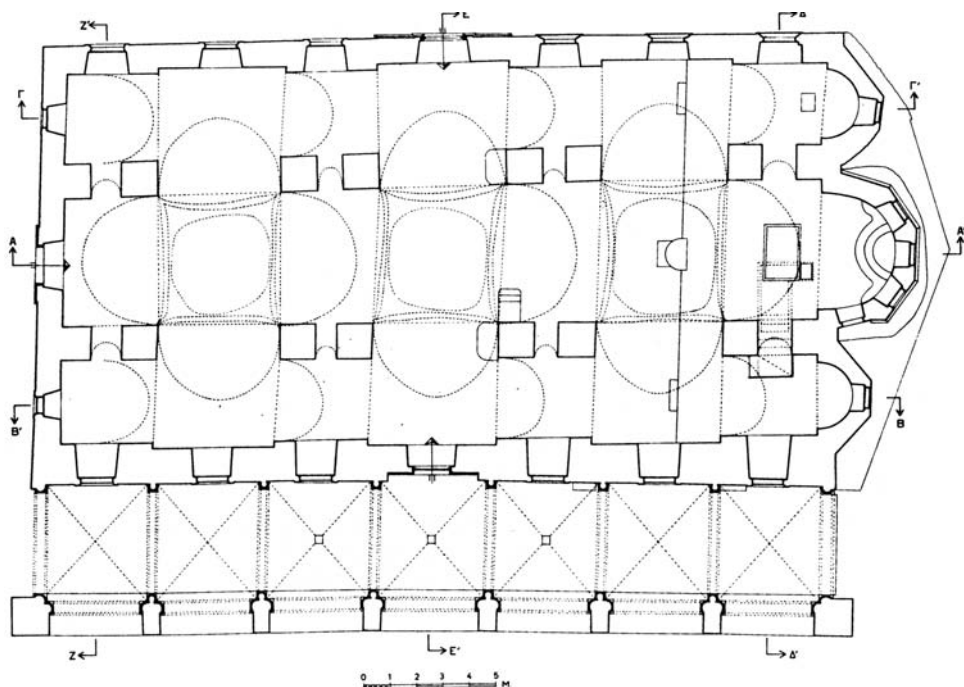


Figure 28.12 St Lazaros, Larnaca, Cyprus: ground plan, after Papageorgiou 1998.

earlier barrel vault. The partly excavated early medieval successor to the large late antique cathedral of St Epiphanius nearby appears to have been an initially timber-roofed basilica that was subsequently vaulted with three domes over its nave; unlike St Barnabas, the superstructure here probably followed closely the ground plan with barrel vaults over the aisles. A combination of the two schemes was employed at the churches of Peristerona and Yeroskepou. As mentioned above in connection with Canosa, in addition to the three domes over their nave, the barrel-vaulted aisles of these churches are interrupted by lower domes, although the latter's positioning is not reflected in the ground plan; this remains firmly basilical with the aisles isolated from the nave by low and opaque pier arcades. What is more, at least in the case of Peristerona the longitudinal layout may have been conditioned yet again by an earlier structure on the site.

Unavoidably the latter two monuments, because of their number of domes, have been associated with the Holy Apostles (and the related churches at Ephesus and Venice). Enlart was the first to advocate a possible link. Wharton tentatively pursued the argument further in connection not only with the Peristerona and Yeroskepou churches but also with those at Salamis and Larnaca, noting the similarities in the support system of the latter group (each dome on its own set of piers as at San Marco) and their quasi-apostolic associations.³⁵ Indeed, both Barnabas and Lazaros of Bethany were traditionally credited with the foundation of the sees of Salamis and Kition (Larnaca) respectively, and the site of their shrines was thought to house their sepulchre. Yet these are the very structures that lack lateral domes and any pretence to the cruciform and centralized layout of the Holy Apostles. The same holds true of St Epiphanius, housing the relic of the eponymous Church Father. The churches at Yeroskepou and Peristerona, on the other hand, although boasting five domes, have no known link with prominent figures from the early Christian period, the original dedication of the former being uncertain while the latter was dedicated to Barnabas and Hilarion, two obscure fifth-century Cappadocian anchorites. Leaving aside issues of modes of cultural interaction between Constantinople and Cyprus during the period in question, the suggestion of an allusion in their architecture to the Holy Apostles is difficult to accept. The multi-domed schemes of Cyprus are more likely to have resulted from less lofty considerations, related to the existence of earlier structures (that bequeathed their basilical layout to their successors) and, as elsewhere, to experiments with vaulting solutions.³⁶

CONCLUSION

The process that led to the construction of the Apulian structures is comparable but not identical to that observed during the same period in Aquitaine; the impact of San Sabino is slightly different to that of Saint-Front in that the former played perhaps a significant role in establishing the domed nave as the norm, at least among the group of monuments discussed above. The Byzantine East and its domed churches were visited by pilgrims and Crusaders from numerous regions of western Europe that never developed a taste for multi-domed naves. This offers yet another indication of the peculiar conditions prevailing in both Aquitaine and Apulia. As for the idea assigning a defining role to Cyprus, it must be abandoned once and for all. It is untenable in the current state of our knowledge regarding the circumstances of

construction of monuments in all areas concerned. Any similarities are almost certainly coincidental and not the result of a process of conscious imitation. For reasons particular to each area (local building traditions and prevalent church schemes, structural considerations) it was deemed appropriate to cover church naves with a sequence of domes. Comparable parameters affected the construction of naves with various types of domes during the same period elsewhere too (San Cataldo and San Giovanni degli Eremiti at Palermo, the *Langhauskuppelkirchen* of Upper Egypt), surely indicating more than anything else that this was again the result of a legitimate search for structurally sound and functional vaulting.³⁷ This is not to deny the unquestionable importance of the Holy Apostles. But the prestigious model was instrumental in determining the architectural scheme of San Marco, perhaps San Sabino and, indirectly, Saint-Front only. The multi-domed architecture of all other groups of monuments is the result of the unrelated developments outlined above. The lure of Constantinople and its apostolic shrine was certainly strong in the medieval world, and Venice constitutes the most potent case in point. It should not, however, be sought in the multi-domed naves of Cyprus, Apulia or distant Aquitaine.

NOTES

- 1 Regnante itaque Vitale Faliero, Veneticorum duce egregio, consummata est Venetiae ecclesia evangelistae Marci, a Domenico Contareno, duce nobilissimo, fundata, consimili constructione artificiosae illi ecclesiae, quae in honorem duodecim Apostolorum Constantinopolis est constructa: *RHC* Occ. 5: 284; Demus 1960: 90; Buchwald 2000: 40–2.
- 2 *ODB* 2: 940; Heisenberg 1908; Grierson 1962; Angelidi 1983a; Dark 2002 with earlier bibliography.
- 3 Prokopios, *Buildings* Liv.9–18, Vi.4–6.
- 4 *ODB* 1: 706; Thiel 2005.
- 5 *EAM* 11: 527–8 for an overview of propositions down to the late 1990s; see also Cecchi 2003.
- 6 Demus 1960: 65–6, 69, 73.
- 7 Warren 1990; Warren 1997; Mainstone 1991; Mainstone 1997; Megaw 1996.
- 8 As implied in Bouras 1997: 169.
- 9 Demus 1960: 90–9; Buchwald 2000: 40–2.
- 10 Krautheimer 1942.
- 11 For opposing views see Krautheimer 1969 (also Krautheimer 1986: 242 and n. 11) and Wharton Epstein 1982.
- 12 Choisy 1899, 2: 201.
- 13 Conant 1978: 284, 289–90; Durlat 1979: 309.
- 14 Grabar 1947: 502 n. 2.
- 15 Verneilh 1851; Choisy 1899, 2: 51–2.
- 16 Demus 1960: 95–6; also Bréhier 1927: 245; Conant 1978: 289; and Ousterhout 1996: 21. For a Byzantine, and against a Venetian, origin see Enlart 1919–24, 1: 234.
- 17 Conant 1978: 284.
- 18 Bertaux 1904, 1: 386–7; Diehl 1910: 676–7; Diehl 1926, 2: 721; Rey 1925; Enlart 1926; Bréhier 1927.
- 19 Daras 1942; Daras 1959: 69–90; Daras 1963; Secret 1968: 37–44; Conant 1978: 283–90; Durlat 1979: 304–10.
- 20 Rey 1925: 8–9; Bréhier 1927: 251; Daras 1963: 55; Vidal *et al.* 1969: 193–232.
- 21 Enlart 1926; Durlat 1979: 287–8. An earlier date is suggested in Vidal *et al.* 1969.
- 22 Enlart 1899, 2: 706–7; Enlart 1919–24, 1: 106, 233–6; Enlart 1926; and Diehl 1910: 676–7; Diehl 1926, 2: 721; Daras 1963: 55; Conant 1978: 284; Atroshenko and Collins 1985: 78.
- 23 Enlart 1926: 142.
- 24 Papacostas 1999, 2: 19–20.

- 25 Enlart 1926: 134–6; Bréhier 1927: 242–3, 250–1.
- 26 Bertaux 1904, 1: 378, 386.
- 27 Soteriou 1940: 409.
- 28 As noted in Bouras 1997: 168.
- 29 Wharton Epstein 1983: 81–3; Wharton 1988: 148–9. See also Belli d’Elia 1987: 68–70.
- 30 Wharton Epstein 1983: 80, 83–5.
- 31 Bertaux 1904, 1: 375–99; Ionescu 1935; Bertaux 1978, 5: 595–626; Belli d’Elia 1987: 37, 39–40, 42–3, 99–101, 357–63; Wharton 1988: 158–9.
- 32 Bertaux 1904, 1: 387–95; Ionescu 1935: 124–8; Soteriou 1940: 409. See also Venditti 1967: 108.
- 33 Ionescu 1935: 69–70; Venditti 1967: 117–18; Belli d’Elia 1987: 42–3.
- 34 Megaw 1974: 78–9; Wharton 1988: 61–7; Papacostas 1999, 2: 18–20, 27–8, 54–5, 63–4; Papageorgiou 1998; Chotzakoglou 2005: 490–4. The doctoral research by Charles Stewart, recently completed at Indiana University, Bloomington, may shed light on this and related issues.
- 35 Enlart 1926: 141; Wharton 1988: 66.
- 36 As argued in Ćurčić 1999: 77.
- 37 Cassata and Costantino 1986: 75–6, 113–14; Grossmann 2002: 81–7.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

SACRED SPACE FROM CONSTANTINOPLE TO VENICE



Thomas E. A. Dale

Sacred space has conventionally been identified with architectural typologies tied to specific ritual functions or with the iconography and disposition of sacred images within a building.¹ Recent research suggests a more dynamic model in which sacred space is defined by the interaction of the viewer/worshipper with architectural space, sacred substances including relics, as well as holy images within the context of communal rituals and private devotions.² It has also been argued that sacred space is activated through the appeal to all of the senses by a wide range of stimuli, including the smell of incense, the sight of natural and artificial lighting, the sound of chant or the spoken voice, the touching and sometimes kissing of material images, the taste of a ritual meal and the choreography of movement within space.³ Such an interpretative model seems particularly apt for the basilica of San Marco in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade. Although Venice's rulers had already acquired Byzantine relics and images prior to the thirteenth century, they now began to refashion their own sacred space in the palace chapel in unprecedented ways. Within the pre-existing architectural framework (Figure 29.1), a five-domed Greek cross structure derived from the Apostoleion in Constantinople, an appeal was made both to individual worshippers and pilgrims and the collective audience of the state rituals on major feast-days, adapting certain aspects of Byzantine sacrality to a distinctly western preoccupation with vision and ostension around the turn of the thirteenth century.

This essay explores two ways in which Venice reconfigured its most important and official sacred space by appropriating sacred commodities from Byzantium: the recreation of Byzantine liturgical furniture; and the ritual display of eastern relics and holy images. I begin with a discussion of the two pulpits and the high altar as the principal settings for public ceremonies of the Venetian state. Then I consider how Venice made use of some of the most important Byzantine objects brought to Venice after the Fourth Crusade – the upper tier of enamels of the Pala d'Oro, the *Nicopea* icon, the Marian relief icons encompassing the interior space and the reliquaries of the Passion.

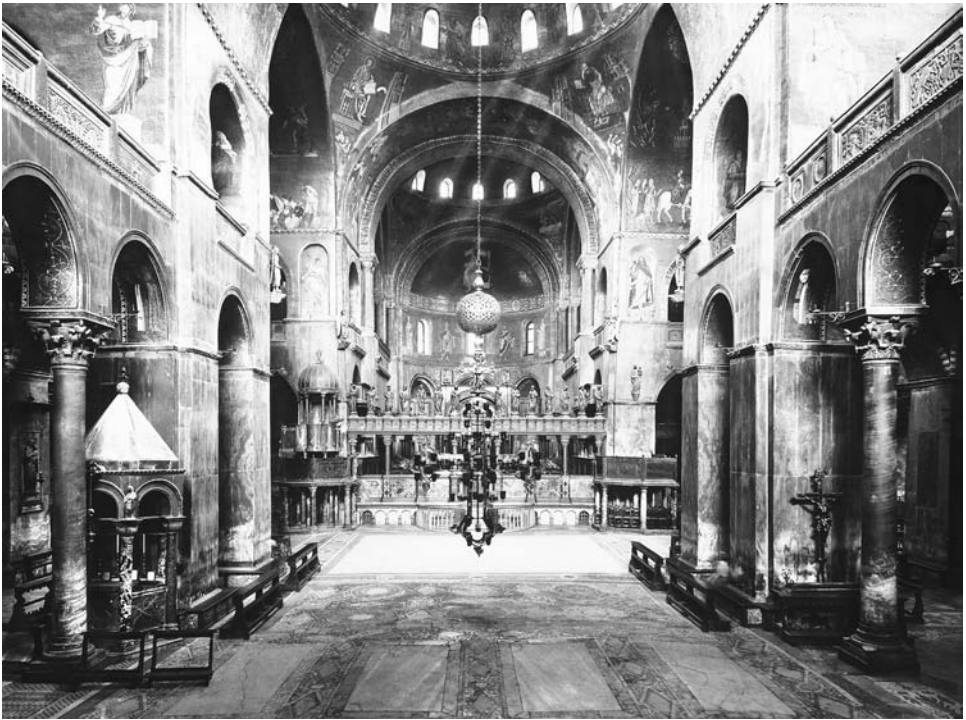


Figure 29.1 San Marco, Venice: general view, interior to the east. Anderson, Rome/
Art Resource, New York.

THE RITUAL SETTING: THE PULPITS AND THE HIGH ALTAR

Among the most conspicuous Byzantine artifacts displayed on the interior of San Marco in the thirteenth century are the carved transom slabs incorporated into the two pulpits that stand in front of the late fourteenth-century choir screen (Figure 29.2). Elevated high above the nave on precious marble columns, both structures provide platforms for liturgy and ducal ceremonial.

The pulpit on the south side, known as the *bigonzo*, is a polygonal structure comprising six porphyry slabs, two of which are early Byzantine transom reliefs, carved with crosses projecting from circular shields. The second, two-tiered pulpit (Figure 29.3), on the north side of the sanctuary comprises a similar combination of early Byzantine transom slabs and later Venetian framework. The polygonal lower storey of the pulpit resembles the *bigonzo* in plan, but is joined to a monumental ramp which rises from the pavement on two levels of blind arcades. The lower section of the pulpit comprises early Byzantine transom slabs in Thessalian green marble, inscribed with crosses. The upper level, reached by its own ramp, rises from the middle of the lower pulpit on a four-lobed plan with six slender colonnettes sustaining a small cupola sheathed in silver gilt.

It is generally accepted that both pulpits were assembled from early Byzantine spolia imported from Constantinople after the Fourth Crusade. The red porphyry



Figure 29.2 San Marco, Venice: south pulpit (*bigonzo*). T. E. A. Dale.

panels of the *bigonzo*, for example, are closely related to sixth-century panels still *in situ* in Hagia Sophia in Istanbul.⁴ As Middeldorf Kosegarten has argued, however, the pulpits were probably not created until the reign of Doge Ranieri Zeno (1252–68). The first references to the pulpits are found in Martino da Canal's *Estoires de Venise*, composed in that doge's honour. Both pulpits are also represented in the mosaics of the *Apparition* miracle in the south transept, dated by Demus to the late 1250s or early 1260s.⁵

A significant motivation for the Venetian reuse of the Byzantine panels lay in the material's imperial resonances.⁶ Porphyry was the material of choice for imperial columns from the time of Constantine,⁷ and, as early as the eighth century, the Byzantine empress gave birth to future emperors in a porphyry-lined chamber.⁸ Porphyry was also frequently used to mark thresholds of significant ritual spaces

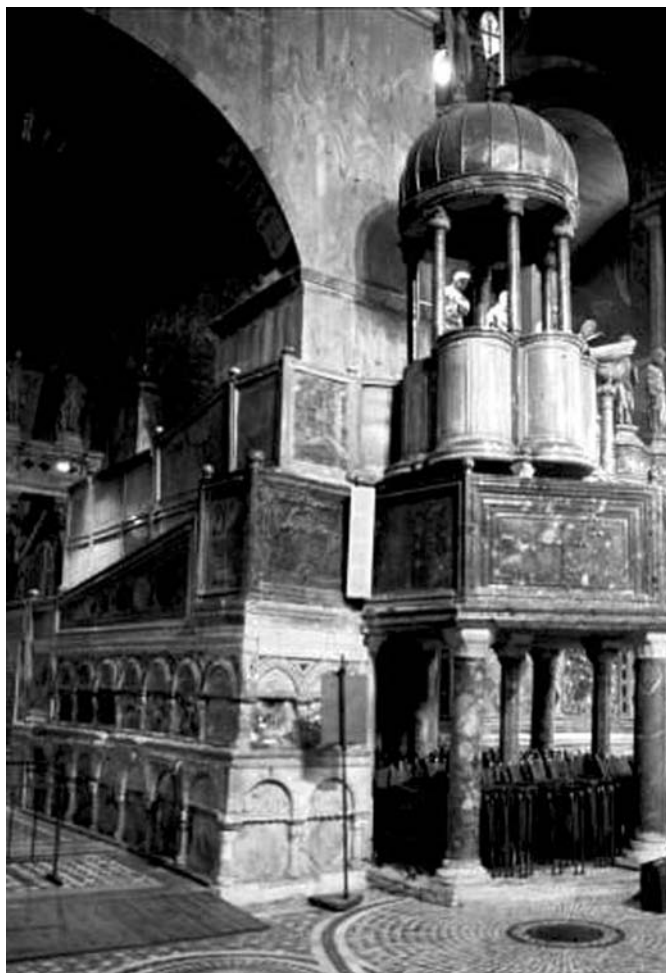


Figure 29.3 San Marco, Venice: north pulpit. T. E. A. Dale.

within the Great Palace and Hagia Sophia, where the emperor and his retinue stood.⁹ Thessalian marble or “green porphyry” likewise had imperial associations due to its colour,¹⁰ but within the context of Hagia Sophia, it was more specifically deployed to enclose the sacred space of sanctuary and solea,¹¹ to represent the rivers of paradise on the nave floor¹² and to mark stations where processions stopped during festal liturgies.¹³ The choice of this stone to enclose the sanctuary also reflects the widespread association of green stones with a verdant meadow of paradise.¹⁴

Just as Venice had long adopted Byzantine insignia and court titles to lend prestige to the office of the doge,¹⁵ so it now appropriated spolia from Justinianic monuments, taking care to distinguish the symbolism of colour and material in order to provide an authentic setting for the sacred rituals it adapted from Constantinople. The disposition of elevated pairs of pulpits on opposite sides of the crossing follows an early Christian custom that was revived in Rome and south Italy at the end of the eleventh century.¹⁶ The functions of the San Marco pulpits, however, coincided

more closely with Byzantine ritual practice. In contrast to the western convention of dividing the readings of the Epistle and Old Testament on one side and the Gospel on the other, the north pulpit, like the Byzantine ambo, was used for the proclamation of biblical lections as well as preaching. Bartolomeo Bonifacio's *Rituum ceremoniale* of 1564, an invaluable compilation of ducal ceremonial and liturgy in San Marco, distinguishes the doge's *pulpitum maius*, or *pulpitum magnus*,¹⁷ on the south side, from the pulpit of the readings – the *pulpitum lectionum*, or *pulpitum Evangelium*, on the north.¹⁸ The north pulpit's assimilation of the functions of a Byzantine ambo is matched by its form and material. Thessalian green transom slabs delimit a ritual space at the lower level of the pulpit much like those of the solea that framed the lower level of the ambo at Hagia Sophia. Similarly, the upper level of the Venetian pulpit, which comprises a projecting curved central section surmounted by colonnettes and a gilded dome, evokes the model of the early Byzantine ambo of the Great Church.¹⁹

The red porphyry *bigonzo*, by contrast, provided a raised throne platform for the doge when he participated in the most important liturgical feasts including Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Palm Sunday, Easter, Christmas and the Ascension. Frequently described in the *Rituum ceremoniale*, this practice is documented in the 1260s by Martino da Canal and a little later in the *Statutes of the Canons of San Marco* (1308).²⁰ Canal records that it was also from this “percle” that the doge heard the mass on Easter Day and, from the accession of Lorenzo Tiepolo in 1268 onward, was acclaimed to the people following his election.²¹

The doge's porphyry enclosure resembles in function, and probably material, the Byzantine emperor's metatorion in Hagia Sophia. According to Paul the Silentiary and Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, the emperor attended the Eucharist on major feast-days from an enclosure, containing his throne, located in the south aisle.²² Most recent scholarship assumes that the ground-floor metatorion was located in the space behind the south-east exedra, where a suggestive pattern of markings for a screen can be detected in the pavement, enclosing a space along the south wall spanning about 18.5 by some 3.6 meters between the two columns.²³ Constantine records a second metatorion used by the empress on Easter Sunday and by the emperor on other occasions.²⁴ As for its appearance, the metatorion would have comprised a series of transom slabs such as those that framed the sanctuary itself, with columns supporting an architrave, in the easternmost bay along the south wall.²⁵ Although the early textual sources are silent about the material, red porphyry is the most likely candidate given the imperial uses discussed above.

The theft of the original transom slabs of the metatorion after the Fourth Crusade is supported by Byzantine sources. Niketas Choniates reports that the high altar was “broken into pieces and divided among the despoilers,” and that the Latins “found it fitting to bring out as so much booty the all-hallowed vessels and furnishings which had been wrought with incomparable elegance and craftsmanship from rare materials.”²⁶ George Pachymeres records that Patriarch Arsenius had to install new furnishings after the Byzantine restoration under Michael Palaeologus in 1261.²⁷ That the sixth-century transom slabs now incorporated into the pulpits of San Marco came to Venice as spolia from Constantinople is suggested by chronicles which assert that Enrico Dandolo himself had already sent “many marble panels and columns of porphyry and marble with much mosaic to adorn the church of San

Marco.”²⁸ The Venetians had both the political motivation and the capacity to ship large slabs of porphyry home as war booty. Although the doges never claimed the imperial title, starting with Enrico Dandolo they did style themselves as the rulers over “one quarter and a half [i.e. three-eighths] of the Roman empire.” Long established in the Byzantine capital, Venetians were familiar with the rituals of the Byzantine state. They also exercised direct control over Hagia Sophia from 1205 when Tommaso Morosini assumed the office of Latin Patriarch of Constantinople.²⁹ What is more, an examination of the pavement in the probable locations of imperial metatoria on the ground floor as well as the site in the south gallery reveals positions of the original postholes for the enclosure, and confirms that the San Marco slabs reused in the *bigonzo* coincide closely with the length of the original slabs at Hagia Sophia.³⁰

While the material and design as well as certain ritual functions of the San Marco pulpits evoke the model of Hagia Sophia, other aspects reflect a distinctly western concern for the role of vision and ostension in granting the laity visible access to the sacred. The *bigonzo*, which performs some of the functions of the metatorium, is moved from the relative seclusion of a side aisle to the more prominent location of the crossing in front of the chancel screen and is raised aloft on columns, because, apart from making more visible the person of the doge during festal masses, it served as a platform for the ostension of relics. Following a practice that was increasingly common from the thirteenth century on, the Venetian doge had the canons of San Marco display relics of the Passion from his porphyry pulpit on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Ascension Day. Bonifacio is the first source to specify that this display took place from the *bigonzo*, but this must have been the case as early as the thirteenth century when the Venetians looted the most important relics from the imperial sanctuaries of Constantinople.³¹ Martino da Canal reports that the doge had the relics and blood of Christ as well as the True Cross displayed in San Marco,³² and the Statutes of the Canons of San Marco (1308) specify that the canons should display the blood of Christ and other relics “summo mane” to the people on Good Friday and Ascension Day.³³

The public ostension of relics reflects fundamental liturgical changes relating to the display of the Eucharist in the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. In the course of the twelfth century, the insistence on Christ’s real, historical presence in the consecrated host led to a dramatization of the moment of consecration with the pronounced Elevation of the Host.³⁴ A little later in the thirteenth century after the official proclamation of the doctrine of transubstantiation, a decline in regular participation in communion by the laity was complemented by a new belief in ocular communion; to behold the elevated host was considered tantamount to assimilating the body of Christ without directly touching or digesting it.³⁵ Seeing the consecrated host, or, by extension, the relics of Christ and the saints, sufficed as a form of communion, because it was believed that the image of the original object, with all of its diverse sensory data, was carried through rays of light through the eyes of the beholder and thence to be imprinted in the fabric of memory.³⁶ This greater emphasis on visibility of sacred commodities may have encouraged, in addition to the construction of new pulpits, the elevation of the sanctuary platform itself and the highlighting of the three most important altars of the church – the high altar and the principal altars of the transept arms – with new ciboria.³⁷

RENEWING THE HIGH ALTAR AND THE PALA D'ORO

It is at the high altar that contemporaneous western practices of ritual ostension most directly shaped the redisplay of Byzantine artifacts in Venetian sacred space. The tomb of Mark in the crypt was highlighted by the newly renovated Pala d'Oro (Figure 29.4), transformed early in the thirteenth century from antependium into altarpiece, and by the impressive ciborium, manufactured from Byzantine spolia – including the *verde antico* green marble of the canopy, and four historiated columns.³⁸ The Pala d'Oro was transformed from antependium into retable in 1209 under Doge Pietro Ziani primarily by the addition of six large Byzantine enamels of major liturgical feasts flanking a single panel depicting the Archangel Michael.³⁹ It is generally believed that the Venetians stole the larger enamels from the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople.⁴⁰ The Byzantine patriarch Joseph made this identification when he visited Venice after the Council of Ferrara in 1438.⁴¹ The large arched panels originally belonged to the epistyle of a templon like the two painted examples from the twelfth century still preserved at Mt Sinai,⁴² and both the style of the enamels and their precious gold setting suggest that they originally adorned the templon of the imperial mausoleum of the Komnenian dynasty at the Pantokrator monastery.⁴³ The Venetians would have had ready access to this booty, because it was here that their Podestà made his headquarters at the time of the Fourth Crusade; the Pantokrator monastery was also home to the Venetian treasury throughout the Latin occupation.⁴⁴

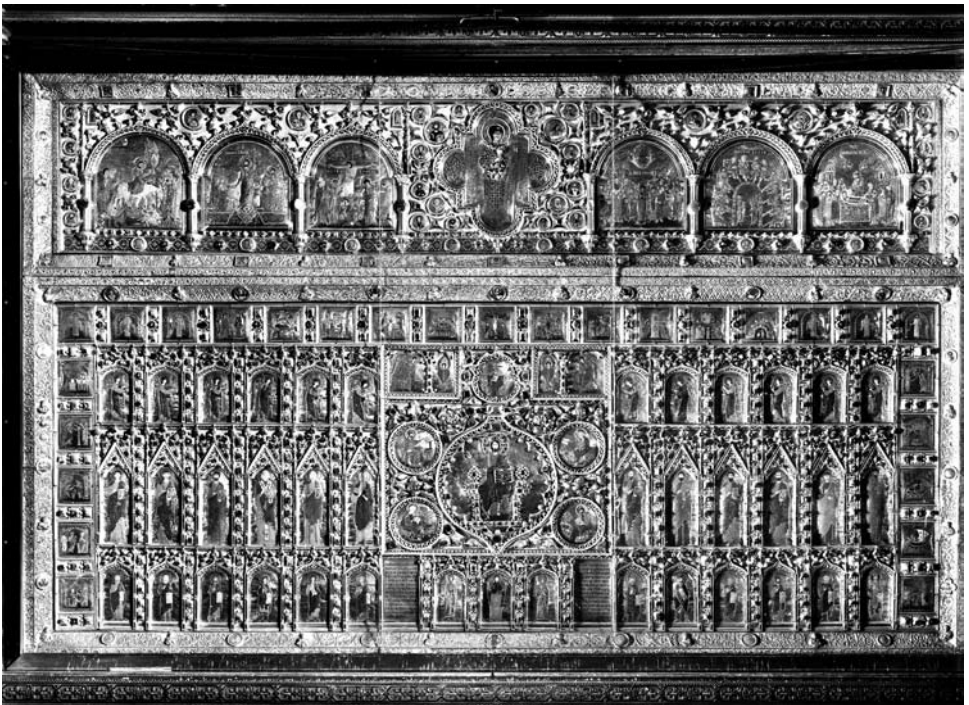


Figure 29.4 San Marco, Venice: Pala d'Oro, general view. Alinari/Art Resource, New York.

The reuse of these two frieze fragments had a practical advantage: they were executed in the same materials and techniques and were stylistically close to the pre-existing gold and enamels which had originally been imported from Byzantium at the beginning of the twelfth century. It was thus relatively easy to expand the dimensions of the antependium to produce a retable that would be visible from a great distance down the nave. What is more, the substitution of pala for antependium was in keeping with western liturgical developments around the turn of the thirteenth century. As mentioned above, the dramatic elevation of the host, documented in Paris by the last decade of the twelfth century, was designed to enhance the visibility of the host at the moment of transubstantiation and facilitate ocular communion.⁴⁵ Hellmut Hager and Henk van Os have argued that the first altarpieces were antependia that had been converted into retables placed atop altars in direct response to liturgical and theological change.⁴⁶ The retable became the backdrop for the drama of the elevation, highlighting the presence of Christ in the Eucharistic host through the images of Christ and the Madonna and Child.

The second related phenomenon concerns the display of relics of the saints. The Fourth Lateran Council confirmed a practice already common for a century of elevating relics for proper display on or behind the altar. The sixty-second canon of the Council mandated that relics should not be exposed directly to view but only within reliquaries and preferably on the altar.⁴⁷ It thus sanctioned the need to make present the saint through the container. In the case of San Marco, the relics were actually contained in an elevated tomb directly beneath the altar, in the crypt. But it was the Pala d'Oro that most conspicuously advertised the presence of St Mark in the upper church. The elevated retable or reredos amounted to a public ostension of the tomb site hidden from view beneath the altar; its narratives further showed how Venice's state church came to be hallowed by the presence of Mark's relics.⁴⁸

The selection of panels from the Pantokrator templon, displayed on the Pala d'Oro, is of particular significance in the Venetian context. The row of feast scenes is divided into two sections by the central figure of the Archangel Michael: at left, the Passion cycle, starting with the Palm Sunday image of the Entry into Jerusalem, followed by the Anastasis, the Easter icon, and the Crucifixion, standing for Good Friday; at right, the conclusion of Christ's terrestrial career, the Ascension and Pentecost, and one Marian feast, the Dormition and Assumption of the Virgin. As Volbach has pointed out, these six feasts represent the second half of the usual twelve feasts displayed on twelfth-century painted epistyles of the Byzantine templon.⁴⁹ The decision to choose these panels and not the earlier episodes, however, might also have been linked to the importance attached to these feasts in the ritual calendar of the ducal chapel. Four of the Christological feasts were celebrated with elaborate rituals involving the procession of the doge – Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter and the Ascension, also known as the *Sensa*, the festival in which Venice was ritually married to the sea. Pentecost had a local significance, because of its association with Mark's own apostolic mission; and the feast of the Assumption was the principal Marian feast, celebrated with increasing devotion in Venice after the arrival of the relic-icon, the *Nicopea*.

The Archangel Michael initially appears as an odd interpolation into the regular row of feasts, especially since he is turned inward to the right. This panel must originally have belonged to a symmetrical composition of angels and saints flanking

Christ as part of an extended Deesis, such as that found on another panel from Sinai. The shift of Michael to the central axis of the Pala d'Oro visually links the archangel with the *Hetimoisia* or empty throne prepared for the Messiah, the Christ in Majesty and the orant Virgin. Hahnloser has suggested that Michael should be connected with the sacrament of the Eucharist, noting that in the fourteenth-century restoration of the pala, he was endowed with a low-relief hand holding a chalice containing a pearl to suggest the consecrated wine and host.⁵⁰ Michael's presence would have been particularly meaningful at the time of the elevation, visually emphasizing the epiphany of the sacramental body and blood of Christ in the Eucharistic host and wine.

Michael's visual prominence in the renovated Pala d'Oro also has a political significance that was appropriated by the Venetian court from Byzantium. Michael was commonly regarded as the protector of Byzantine emperors and, at Hagia Sophia, a mosaic of the archangel in the south-west vestibule proclaimed his role of protector of the imperial Church.⁵¹ Michael was also the titular saint of the Komnenian mausoleum at the Pantokrator monastery and thus protector of the imperial tombs.⁵² This association of the archangel with rulership is echoed in Venice in a number of ways. As Staale Sinding-Larsen has pointed out, the annual rotation of offices for the Great Council took place on his feast-day.⁵³ By the twelfth century, Michael's icon was also used as a guardian figure for the relics of St Mark himself at his first tomb site in Venice. The legendary account of Mark's translation to Venice recorded that Mark was buried *in angulo palatii*, in the corner of the ducal palace.⁵⁴ Later mediaeval tradition identified that site with the south-east corner of the crossing in the present church, and it was here that Mark's relics were allegedly recovered after the completion of the new building in 1094 within the Pilastro del Miracolo.

The third and final phase of renovation of the Pala d'Oro under Doge Andrea Dandolo in the 1340s entailed the creation of a new, Gothic framework for the enamels and the introduction of gems and smaller enamel medallions in the framing spandrels. At the same time the Pala ferriale was painted by Paolo Veneziano to serve as a cover for the Pala d'Oro.⁵⁵ This new panel painting, in keeping with Tuscan altarpieces, represented the life of Mark as a *predella* to the hierarchy of Venetian saints and apostles flanking the Man of Sorrows. The central image, based on a Byzantine icon that originated in the liturgy of Holy Week,⁵⁶ served in this new context to actualize the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and to emphasize its sacrificial nature; the sacrifice was further underlined by the juxtaposition of the Man of Sorrows with the scene below of Mark's martyrdom in Alexandria.

The new Pala ferriale was also equipped with pulleys, so that it could be raised on major feast-days to expose the gold and enamel altarpiece with Christ in Majesty at its center.⁵⁷ On these occasions, as we learn from the *Cerimoniale* of Bonifacio and of Giovanni Pace, the raising of the Pala ferriale was accompanied by the singing of five laudatory psalms (112, 116, 145–7) and the *Te Deum* – a fitting tribute to the heavenly ruler portrayed on the golden altar and an allusion to the majesty of His earthly representative the doge.⁵⁸ This element of sacred theatre complemented the pomp of the feast-days when the major ducal processions took place, moving through the space of the choir and side chapels. As on the occasion of his investiture at the altar over Mark's tomb, during these festal epiphanies, the doge would have momentarily faced the heavenly ruler enthroned at the center of the Pala d'Oro, so that the spectator was reminded of the sacrosanct nature of the ducal office of which

Christ was the model. On a number of these occasions, the Pala d'Oro served as a backdrop to the glistening reliquaries of the treasury when they were exposed to public view on the high altar as a collective image of the heavenly multitude of the saints protecting the Venetian state. Finally on the Marian feasts, the altar and Pala d'Oro offered a lavish setting for the celebrated icon of the *Nicopea*, the vaunted protector of the Byzantine empire and Venetian state.

THE *NICOPEA* AND MARIAN ICONS IN VENETIAN SACRED SPACE

Prior to the thirteenth century, there is no documentation of portable Marian icons in San Marco. That situation would change, however, with the importation of a series of panel paintings and marble relief icons, in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade. Brought as booty from Constantinople, they served both as focal points for intimate, personal worship, and as collective intercessory or “victory-bringing” images that would protect the doge and Venetian state, just as they had been deployed to safeguard the Byzantine emperor and his capital city since the middle Byzantine period.⁵⁹ In the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a series of Byzantine relief icons and Venetian imitations formed a protective mantle around the church's perimeter. The greater importance ascribed to Mary as protector of the Venetian state is reflected both in the processional use of Marian icons and in the insertion of Marian intercessions in the acclamations of the doge at Easter, first recorded by Martino da Canal during the dogate of Ranieri Zeno (1253–68).⁶⁰

By the beginning of the fourteenth century, San Marco possessed at least three portable icons of the Virgin and Child with metal or enamel revetments that suggest they came from Constantinople. A 1325 inventory of the treasury and sacristy refers to “a large icon painted with the figure of St Mary with the son, adorned with silver” and another “small icon painted with the figure of St Mary, adorned with enamel and silver.”⁶¹ The same inventory lists a third icon of the Virgin Mary and Christ child in cloisonné enamel as well as a series of metalwork relief icons, depicting Christ, the Archangel Michael and saints.⁶²

The icon known in Venice as the *Nicopea* is a Byzantine panel painting attributed to the late eleventh or early twelfth century.⁶³ It is the most likely candidate for the larger of two painted icons mentioned in the inventory. It represents a half-length, frontal figure of the Virgin holding the Christ child tightly to her body with both arms on axis, and includes medieval Byzantine enamels on a silver-gilt frame that has been much reworked as a result of its transfer to a permanent setting on the main altar of the north transept. Martin Schulz has convincingly argued that the Venetian *Nicopea* is an authentic Byzantine copy of the miracle-working icon once housed in the Blachernae Palace chapel.⁶⁴ A related type of Madonna, with the child held frontally and close to the chest, but within a medallion, appears on certain Byzantine lead seals from the middle Byzantine period, inscribed as “MP ΘΥ Η' ΝΙΚΟΠΟΙΟΣ.” An icon from the Blachernae monastery is also the first Marian icon specifically identified as the *Nikopoios* icon carried into battle by Byzantine emperors. Recent research has demonstrated, however, that other Marian icons could be designated as the *Nikopoios*, including the Virgin orant, the *Hodegetria* and the *Blachernitissa* icon in which the Christ child is displayed within a medallion.⁶⁵

Venetian accounts of the Fourth Crusade going back to the sixteenth century connect the San Marco icon with a much celebrated *Nikopoios* captured by Crusader soldiers from the Byzantine emperor Alexios V Doukas “Mourtzouphlos.”⁶⁶ By contrast, the eyewitness chronicler of the Fourth Crusade, Robert de Clari, claims that the Venetians gained possession of a different Byzantine icon “covered in precious stones” which the Byzantines carried every Sunday in procession.⁶⁷ Describing it as the “first image of our Lady that was ever made or painted,” a status usually reserved for the *Hodegetria*, Robert de Clari also records that the Venetians demanded this icon in exchange for supporting the election of Henry as emperor in 1207, but a letter of Innocent III indicates that this same icon was actually stolen from Hagia Sophia by the Venetians and taken to the Pantokrator monastery – the same church from which the upper tier of enamels on the Pala d’Oro came.⁶⁸ As Gallo suggests, the Venetians may well have kept this icon at the Pantokrator monastery, the seat of the Venetian podestà, until forced to flee with the recapture of Constantinople by Michael VI Palaiologos in 1261.⁶⁹

The fact that the Venetian *Nicopea* was not permanently installed on its own altar until 1617 allowed it to be deployed as a processional icon and an image-relic worthy of veneration in its own right. Although it is mentioned in the inventory of 1325 as being in the second, vaulted chamber of the treasury,⁷⁰ it is absent from the previous inventory of 1283. Rather than assuming that the *Nicopea* had still not reached Venice in 1283, I would argue that the icon was first housed beneath the *capitello* (Figure 29.1).⁷¹ This thirteenth-century polygonal ciborium, which stands within the easternmost intercolumniation of the north aisle, now contains the miracle-working painted crucifix. The crucifix itself, which dates to the late thirteenth century, was said to have been displayed outdoors in Piazza San Marco and not moved to its current location until 1290 when it was allegedly pierced with knives and caused to bleed.⁷² Although Sansovino asserted that the ciborium was originally displayed outside the church in Piazza San Marco to hallow the crucifix, Brenk points out that the ciborium was designed from the outset to fit its current setting.⁷³ While Brenk assumes that the *capitello* was constructed expressly for the crucifix in honor of the miracle once it was brought into the church in 1290, I would argue that it was constructed a little earlier in the century under Doge Ranieri Zeno, when the ciboria were added to the high altar and transept altars.⁷⁴ It is possible that the ciborium was initially designed to recreate an appropriate Byzantine form of icon shrine for the *Nicopea*, much like the image-ciborium of St Demetrios in Thessalonika; then it would have been moved to make way for the miracle-working crucifix in 1290. The panel cross was certainly not made to be placed within the confined space of such a shrine, but rather atop a beam at the entrance to a sanctuary. The placement of the *Nicopea* in the *capitello*, however, would conform closely to Byzantine practice. Icons such as the *Hodegetria* were placed beneath ciboria for veneration in Byzantine churches, and the fourteenth-century account of an anonymous Russian pilgrim records that Hagia Sophia itself displayed a miracle-working Marian icon beneath a canopy in almost precisely the same location, near the end of the north aisle.⁷⁵ A focus of Marian interest in this area of San Marco is also strengthened by the addition of a narrative cycle of the Virgin over the gallery of the north transept early in the thirteenth century, and by the establishment of a dedicated Marian chapel, the Cappella dei Mascoli, just off the north aisle early in the mid-fifteenth century.⁷⁶

By the time of the inventory of 1580, the *Nicopea* had been transferred to the upper sacristy (Sagrestia di Sopra) and was counted among the “reliquie portate di Costantinopoli.”⁷⁷ Bonifacio shows clearly how the Venetians adapted Byzantine practices associated with icons to their own context prior to the permanent installation of the *Nicopea* in the north transept at the beginning of the seventeenth century. On Sundays, from Pentecost to Advent, the icon was carried in procession during the office, and on each of the Marian feasts it was solemnly processed from the sacristy and then placed on the high altar.⁷⁸ Bonifacio also confirms that the icon was the focus of the canons’ devotions at Vespers each day.⁷⁹

We learn from other sources that it was customary to carry the *Nicopea* out into the more public space of Piazza San Marco on special occasions, thus emulating both Byzantine and medieval Roman models.⁸⁰ Marin Sanudo describes a celebration in the Piazza on 20 September 1515, in which trumpets and other musical instruments were sounded from the western loggia of San Marco while the image of “la Nostra Donna” was displayed in front of the church, accompanied by the chanting of psalms.⁸¹ Complementing the information given by Bonifacio about the veneration of the *Nicopea* within the church at the high altar, and its procession to and from the sacristy, Sanudo offers valuable testimony for the outdoor processions of the icon on major feast-days, including the Assumption on 15 August, and other occasions on 1 April, 2 May and 20 July. For the feast of the Assumption, he records that the icon was carried around the Piazza San Marco, followed by a patriarchal mass.⁸² Later sixteenth-century sources confirm a broader processional use of the image reflecting Byzantine practice. Don Francesco di Alegri, for example, records in 1580 that “the image of Our Lady, painted by St Luke himself,” was “carried in procession at any time of necessity, according to need . . . and with this same image, when it was in Constantinople, they made a procession, as is done here, in which the emperor and clergy of that place (took part).”⁸³

Finally a lengthy note in the vernacular appended to Bonifacio’s Latin text records how the image would be brought out in procession.⁸⁴ Like their Byzantine counterparts, the Venetians viewed the procession of the icon as an intercessory action. The icon was carried out from the sacristy by four young priests on its own litter, preceded by the processional cross and large candlesticks, as four cantors sang the litany to the response of the others, “Sancta Maria ora pro nobis.” Pausing briefly in front of the high altar the icon was taken down through the main entrance of the choir into the south transept, and then the procession continued along the ducal corridor, the route of the government procession each Wednesday, and finally it was paraded around the Piazza San Marco and returned to the church through the Porta Maggiore.

What is important to observe here is the adaptation of Byzantine practice to the Italian context. Beginning in the middle Byzantine period, well-known public processions brought the empire’s most celebrated Marian icons, the *Blachernitissa* and *Hodegetria*, out into the public space of Constantinople. Since the sixth century, the *presbeia*, or intercessory procession, had linked the two oldest Marian foundations, the Blachernae and the Chalkoproteia; toward the end of the tenth century a Marian icon was included in the Friday procession.⁸⁵ Tuesdays brought the *Hodegetria* out into the public space of Constantinople: since at least the eleventh century, it was processed along the Mese to other stational churches. Finally, the Friday *presbeia*

procession was modified under John II Komnenos in order to participate in a weekly memorial service for the Komnenian dynasty at the Pantokrator monastery. The *Blachernitissa* was diverted from its usual route, and, joined by an icon from the Eleousa church, was brought into the imperial mausoleum at the Pantokrator and placed at the emperor's tomb to intercede on his behalf. An additional annual procession of the *Hodegetria* to John II's tomb was mandated to commemorate the day of his death.⁸⁶

The Venetians, who came into possession of the Pantokrator monastery during the Latin occupation of Constantinople less than a century later, must have at least been aware of the Marian processions associated with the Komnenian dynastic tombs and thus wished to adapt such practices for their own use, ensuring the prosperity and protection of the doge and the Venetian state. However, unlike their eastern counterparts, the Venetians frequently displayed the icon as a temporary altarpiece, both on the high altar of San Marco during major feasts in which the doge participated, and on each Saturday for regular devotions on the altar of the Cappella Sant'Isidoro.⁸⁷ Perhaps they saw a connection between the procession of the *Hodegetria* and Eleousa icon to the tomb of the emperor and their own procession of the *Nicopea* to rest over the tomb of their patron saints, Mark the Evangelist and Isidore, thus amplifying this already powerful site of intercession on behalf of the Venetian state where the doge himself was invested with his authority. Within this monumental setting, the icon was also transformed, albeit temporarily, into a form of altarpiece, the principal focus of Marian devotion in the Venetian *polis*. It seems hardly coincidental that the renovation of the high altar of San Marco in the thirteenth century included the installation of a ciborium mounted on historiated columns – possibly spolia from Constantinople – two of which were devoted to the life of the Virgin.⁸⁸ These narratives would have complemented the Marian icon when it was displayed there.⁸⁹

The new emphasis on Mary's patronage of the Venetian state is apparent in the proliferation of relief icons on the exterior and interior of San Marco during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Each of the major thresholds of the church is marked by one. The marble panel of the Virgin *orans*, variously attributed to a Byzantine artist or a Venetian copyist, stands opposite Gabriel on the west façade in the spandrels of the Porta Maggiore; set there between the 1240s and 1270s, these icons form an Annunciation, alluding to the legendary foundation of the city on 25 March.⁹⁰ A second Marian relief icon of the same type, heavily restored if not refabricated during the nineteenth century, stands as a guardian figure adjacent the Porta dei Fiori which leads into the north transept.⁹¹ The *Aniketos* icon, once placed "over the portal" at the south-west corner of San Marco, the Porta da Mar or "sea entrance," was only moved to the right wall of the porch when the space was transformed into a burial chapel for Cardinal Battista Zen.⁹² It is a variation of the Eleousa type, named after an icon from the Eleousa church at the Pantokrator monastery that participated in the intercessory procession of icons to the tombs of the Komnenian emperors there. Marian devotion was further enhanced in this space by the presence of another portable icon that was originally placed over an altar set against the wall adjacent the baptistery, but was transferred to the Cappella San Todoro when the Cappella Zen was created.⁹³

The cult of the Virgin was extended within the church by a series of marble relief

icons arranged at various heights on the perimeter walls or on the major piers at the crossing.⁹⁴ Just inside the northernmost entrance to the church from the narthex, the Porta di San Pietro, is found a highly venerated eleventh-century Byzantine relief of the full-length orant Virgin, the so-called *Madonna delle Grazie*.⁹⁵ This panel echoes one of the icons connected with the Blachernae, sometimes inscribed *Blachernitissa* on lead seals. The special honor ascribed to the icon is enhanced by a canopy from which three lamps are suspended before it. It is also among a select group of marble icons in San Marco to be gilded. A recent restoration of the panel further suggests that it once served as a fountain icon in Constantinople, for its hands were originally pierced, only to be filled with stucco when the image was gilded in Venice.⁹⁶ The Blachernae itself had such an image associated with a fountain and sacred pool where the emperor would ritually be bathed, but the Venetian panel could have come from a number of sites, given the wide diffusion of fountain icons.⁹⁷ For the Venetians, it would also have had particular meaning because of the role of water in the myth of Venice.⁹⁸

This relief panel served as the model for a series of Venetian copies, all from the thirteenth century, distributed throughout the interior and exterior of the basilica: these include a relief set into the west wall of the south aisle above the Porta di San Clemente;⁹⁹ a second, later thirteenth-century copy attached to the northernmost leg of the north-west tetra-pylon supporting the central dome;¹⁰⁰ and a third more boldly carved example adjacent the entrance to the Cappella dei Mascoli at the east end of the north aisle, set within a canopy supported on polygonal columns.¹⁰¹

Two further relief icons featuring Mary complete the interior circuit of San Marco. A smaller Byzantine relief icon of a half-length *Hodegetria* appears at eye-level on the south-west tetra-pylon of the crossing in the south transept.¹⁰² Known as the *Madonna del Baccio*, this work, dated to the thirteenth century, manifests a particularly intense facial expression for the Virgin and is subtly modeled in the areas that have not been effaced by constant touching. Indeed this icon is mounted at eye-level, facilitating a direct, multi-sensory experience through intimate viewing, touching and kissing, much like the *proskynetarion* icons in Byzantine churches. A projecting socle provides space for votive lamps and flowers. This icon type, which had particular importance because of its association with one of the primary Marian processions in Constantinople and its reputed role as eye-witness portrait by St Luke, is fittingly placed along the main processional axis between the ducal palace and the doge's ceremonial seat in the Cappella San Clemente and the *bigonzo*.

On the south aisle wall between the Porta di San Clemente and the entrance to the baptistery, three arched panels, framed by spiral columns and arches carved with foliate motifs, depict the standing figure of Christ, flanked by Mary and John the Baptist, who are turned inward with arms outstretched in prayer to form the classic *Deesis*.¹⁰³ Demus dates the three panels to the eleventh century and assumes that they were originally designed for an iconostasis in Constantinople but brought to Venice after the Fourth Crusade and then reframed in Venetian arcades. This icon group played an important role in public rituals of San Marco. On Maundy Thursday, for example, a procession paused before the “tre santi” to kneel before Christ's image, following one of the gestures of prayer represented by Christ himself in the Gethsemane mosaic on the wall immediately beneath the gallery.¹⁰⁴

Taken as a group, these marble icons reinforce the sacrality of San Marco, and

recreate the impression of a middle Byzantine shrine, literally sanctifying the fabric of the church with intercessory images activated by both individual devotions and public rituals. Kissed and touched, honored with lights and incense, spoken to through prayers of the suppliant, these stationary icons also functioned, like their Byzantine counterparts, as stimuli to a multi-sensory experience of the sacred figures they depict.¹⁰⁵

RELICS FROM BYZANTIUM

One last category of imported artifact from Byzantium strengthened the sacred topography of San Marco. Parallel in function to the *Nicopea* are a series of reliquaries from Constantinople, including at least two dedicated to the blood of Christ, three of the True Cross, a fragment of the head of John the Baptist and arm relics of SS George, Sergios and Stephen, most of which were claimed miraculously to have survived a fire in the treasury in 1231. All of these reliquaries were displayed for special veneration either on the high altar or from the *bigonzo*.

Of comparable status to the victory-bringing *Nicopea* icon is an eleventh-century Byzantine tablet reliquary of the True Cross, executed in enamel and silver gilt, that has been in the treasury of San Marco since at least the 1230s.¹⁰⁶ The lid depicts the Crucifixion in enamel, and when it is removed, a double-barred cross formed of pieces of wood of the cross is revealed, set within a recess in a silver panel. Already mentioned in the inventory of 1283 as an “ycona” containing relics of the cross, it is described more precisely in the inventory of 1325 as the “*icona* with the cross of the wood of the Lord . . . which is customarily displayed on Good Friday.”¹⁰⁷ This must also be the reliquary which Andrea Dandolo describes in his *Chronicum extensum* as “a silver reliquary with a cross relic which Constantine, after its discovery by his mother Helena, carried into battle with him.”¹⁰⁸ The source of the reliquary, like a number of other Byzantine artifacts now in San Marco, is probably the Pantokrator monastery that served as Venetian headquarters during the Latin occupation of Constantinople. A comparable tablet reliquary of the True Cross is recorded in the monastery’s treasury by Antony of Novgorod in 1200, but later Russian chroniclers no longer mention it.¹⁰⁹

The importance of the reliquary to the Venetians is indicated both by its use in the Good Friday Liturgy and by its depiction in a mosaic from the 1230s or 1240s in the sopraporta, the treasury of San Marco (Figure 29.5).¹¹⁰ Here two angels hold aloft a silver-gilt rectangular panel adorned with gems, containing a double-armed cross, comparable to the surviving reliquary in the treasury. This form of relic ostension belongs to a distinctive western iconography that can be found in a series of Byzantine cross reliquaries reshaped for use in the West during the thirteenth century. The cross reliquary of Jaucourt provides a telling analogy: two angels kneel reverentially before a Byzantine cross reliquary which they elevate above their heads to display to the faithful, much like the priest displaying the consecrated host in the newly instituted gesture of *Elevatio*.¹¹¹ Hans Belting has called this particular type of reliquary a “figural monstrance,” because the angels are included as agents of the redisplay of the eastern reliquary.¹¹² The angels in the Venetian mosaic also function on another level as divine agents of a miraculous invention of the cross relic following the fire that ravaged the treasury of San Marco in 1231. The apparition of the

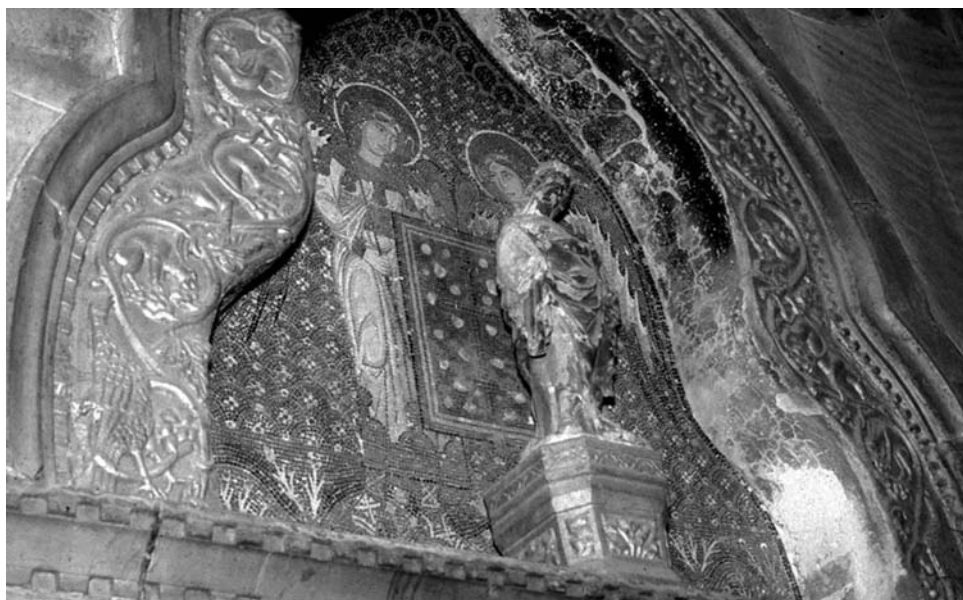


Figure 29.5 San Marco, Venice: sopraporta of the treasury, mosaic with angels displaying the reliquary of the True Cross. T. E. A. Dale.

relics after the fire was interpreted by Doge Ranieri Zeno in 1268 as a sign of divine favor for Venice and more importantly as a vindication of the Venetian appropriation of relics from the East.¹¹³ Seeking to have the miracle recognized by the pope, the doge informs his two ambassadors to the papal see how the relics of the wood of the Holy Cross, the ampulla of the true blood of Christ and the head of St John the Baptist were displayed after the fire, and how the same relics had been brought from Jerusalem to Constantinople by St Helena. He then argued that the miracle demonstrated that “Our Lord Jesus Christ himself wanted to have deposited these relics in the city of the Venetians with the body of Saint Mark, his evangelist.”¹¹⁴ The Venetian possession of the Passion relics is thus justified in part by the earlier theft of the relics of Mark from Alexandria.

The importance of the display of the Passion relics for the ideology of the Venetian state is testified by another image connected with Doge Ranieri Zeno, in this case a marble relief, framed in porphyry and other precious marbles on the western wall of the private corridor running between the Palazzo Ducale and the south transept of San Marco (Figure 29.6).¹¹⁵ On the days that the doge officially attended mass, he would have passed through this space and beheld at his left the most important relics of the treasury immediately behind it. Recalling the figural monstrosities and the sopraporta mosaic of the treasury, two angels kneel at the center of the relief to display the reliquary of the True Blood at eye-level for the doge. To the right and left appear two cross reliquaries, the one on the left displaying the double-armed patriarchal cross typical of Byzantine reliquaries, the other a simple Latin cross. In between them and the blood relic are the reliquaries identified by Debra Pincus as the head relic of John the Baptist at left and the arm of St George at right. These are the very relics that Ranieri Zeno records as having miraculously survived the fire. Thus,



Figure 29.6 San Marco, Venice: relics relief from ducal corridor. T. E. A. Dale.

they are presented to the doge as proof of their continuing presence in the treasury under the divine sanction of the *dextera manus Dei* at right and the angelic messenger at far left. What is more, because of the associations of these particular relics with imperial collections of relics in Byzantium, Debra Pincus has reasonably argued that they also represented a form of transfer of sacral authority from emperor to doge.

The focus of the relief on the blood relic is particularly significant in the thirteenth-century western context. On one level, it recalls the dramatic elevation of the consecrated host as body of Christ at the moment of transubstantiation. But more specifically, in the Venetian context it parallels the display of the “Christ” – the Eucharistic relic of Christ carried in the weekly government procession each Wednesday before the doge through this very corridor into the south transept of the church.¹¹⁶ The body relics of Christ were thus evoked directly to sanction the actions of the Venetian state in the official venue of San Marco.

The relics of the Passion from the East were incorporated into the public ritual of the Venetian state in another way. As mentioned earlier, Passion relics were ostentatiously displayed at the behest of the doge on Good Friday and on the feast of the Ascension from the *bigonzo* (Figure 29.2). The display of relics from this elevated porphyry enclosure is doubly significant. On the one hand, it reflects the growing devotion to body and blood relics of Christ in the thirteenth century and the desire by the faithful to behold and be transformed by their visible presence. On the other hand, the display of the relics of the Passion at this specific location points to the doge’s privileged role as their custodian. Once again we see the Venetians calling

attention to the importance of this particular corner of the church for the sacred topography of the Venetian state. It is here that the doge was acclaimed following his election; and adjacent this pulpit stands the *pilastro del miracolo*, the site of Mark's miraculous self-revelation to his Venetian subjects at his original Venetian tomb site.¹¹⁷

Collectively, the relics of the Passion and holy images from the East assembled in San Marco could be said to evoke in a general way the notion that the chapel of the Venetian doge had inherited the role of one of the most significant imperial relic collections in the Pharos chapel of the Bukoleon Palace of Constantinople. As we learn from Robert de Clari, the Byzantine emperor preserved in this chapel some of the most important relics of the empire later appropriated by the Venetians, including relics of the True Cross, a crystal phial of His blood, the Crown of Thorns and the head of John the Baptist. What is more, treasures within that chapel were enhanced by the precious materials used to adorn its very walls. According to the French chronicler, "the Sacred chapel . . . was so rich and noble that there was no hinge nor band nor any other bit which would be usually made of iron that was not of silver, nor was there any column that was not of jasper or porphyry or some rich precious stone."¹¹⁸ The ostentatious display of precious materials on both the interior and the exterior of San Marco might thus be seen as an appropriate complement to the precious relics within.

The holy images and relics of the Passion ultimately served to identify Venice not only with Constantinople, however, but with the ultimate Christian sacred space – the Holy Land whence the relics had come.¹¹⁹ In his letter regarding the "miracle" of the treasury fire, mentioned above, Doge Ranieri Zeno made a point of stating that the relics of the True Cross had been brought originally from the Holy Land by Helena to Constantinople and thence to Venice by the will of Christ Himself. Similarly, what gave the *Nikopoios* its allure for the Venetians was not only its association with the Byzantine emperor but, more importantly its relic-quality as an authentic likeness of the Virgin painted by St Luke in the Holy Land. In the broader conception of history composed by thirteenth-century Venetian chroniclers, the possession of both was a means of forging their identity as a new chosen people, successor to the Greeks in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade. Martino da Canal sanctifies Venice's participation in the Fourth Crusade by characterizing its people as "perfect in the faith of Jesus Christ" and "servants of the Holy Church."¹²⁰ The chronicler Marco went further, writing Venice into a larger scheme of sacred history beginning with Creation and concluding with the passing of the Byzantine empire to the Venetians in fulfillment of a prophecy inscribed on the porphyry Column of Constantine.¹²¹ Similar ideas seem to have motivated the thirteenth-century mosaic program of the south portal and the contiguous cycle of the atrium.¹²² In the mosaics of the porch, Venice is shown first as the chosen people of St Mark, divinely sanctioned by an angelic vision – the *praedestinatio*, in which Mark learns that his relics will come to Venice and a great city will be built in his honor. Then as one passes into the west branch of the atrium, one follows the story of the chosen people in the Old Testament, culminating in the departure of the Israelites from Egypt – a clear parallel to the translation of the mosaics from Alexandria.

By the time of the definitive collapse of the Byzantine empire in 1453, Venice had so successfully assimilated the trappings of the holy from Byzantium, that the Greek

ex-patriot Cardinal Bessarion considered San Marco the only worthy home for his priceless collection of Byzantine manuscripts. He wrote that Venice was the natural home for his treasures because, “those who approach that city feel as if they are entering another Byzantium.”¹²³ In refashioning the sacred space of San Marco, the Venetians also recast the sacred commodities of Byzantium according to their own political and religious needs, rooted as much in the ritual practices of the Latin West as in the distant East whence these authoritative objects came to honor St Mark.

NOTES

- 1 E.g. Demus 1948; Grabar 1946.
- 2 E.g. Lidov 2004; Baschet 2008.
- 3 Pentcheva 2006b; James 2004.
- 4 Minguzzi 1991–2; Middeldorf Kosegarten 2002: 33, 39–40. For related sixth-century transom slabs, see Guidobaldi *et al.* 1992: figs 82, 84, 88, 95, 97, 99, 109, 111, 115, 125 (San Clemente); 279 (Hagia Eirene); 281 (Corinth); 282 (Hagia Sophia); 284 (Ephesus).
- 5 Demus 1984: II, 27–44, pls 7, 8, 33, 50; Dale 1994: 85–7.
- 6 For San Marco see Minguzzi 1991–2: 20–1; Lorenzoni 2000. On porphyry see Delbrueck 1932; Deer 1959; Gnoli 1971; Butters 1996.
- 7 Butters 1996: 72–3; Mango 1980–1.
- 8 Delbrueck 1932: 27; Herrin 2001: 65.
- 9 Delbrueck 1932: xxii. See also Mango 1959: 84–5; Constantine Porphyrogenetos 1990, I, ch. 25: 90; I, ch. 9: 58; I, ch. 1: 11. For the adaptation of this symbolism to pavements in the Christian basilicas of Rome, including Old St Peter’s, see Glass 1980: 48–54.
- 10 See Kalavrezou 1985: I, 84.
- 11 Friedlander 1912: 225–65; trans. C. Mango 1986: 91–6, esp. 96.
- 12 Mathews 1971: 98, 101 n. 81; Majeska 1978.
- 13 Majeska 1978.
- 14 Kalavrezou 1985: I, 79–85.
- 15 Pertusi 1965.
- 16 Hopkins 1998: 185; Glass 1991b: 67, 203–21; Glass 1991a.
- 17 Bonifacio 1564: fol. 12r/4; Sinding-Larsen 2002: 300.
- 18 E.g. Bonifacio 1564: fol. 2v/4 and fol. 4r/3; Sinding-Larsen 2002: 276, 280.
- 19 Minguzzi 1991–2: 22–4.
- 20 Betto 1984: LXXXIX, 176; LXXV, 174; LXXXVIII, 179–81, esp. 181.
- 21 Limentani 1972: II, [LXXXVII], 246–9; II, [CII], 280–3.
- 22 Friedlander 1912: 243–4; trans. Mathews 1971: 134; and Mango 1972, 1986: 85. *De cer.*, Vogt 1967: Bk I, ch. I: 3–28. See also Majeska 1997: 4–9.
- 23 Mango 1959: 64, 72 and n. 198; Mainstone 1988: 223–6; Majeska 1984: 422–3. Mathews 1971: 96, 132–4, has proposed a second location for an “imperial loge” within the first inter-columniation of the south aisle from the apse but this seems to have been connected with the coronation ceremony.
- 24 *De cer.*, Vogt 1967: I, ch. 9, 61–2; I, ch. 25, 90–1; I, ch. 31: 116–17; I, ch. 36: 140; Xydis 1947; Mathews 1971: 132, 137 n. 99.
- 25 Mainstone 1988: 233; Mathews 1971: 134.
- 26 Choniates 1975: VII, 573–4; trans. Magoulas 1984: 314–15.
- 27 Pachymeres 1835, I, 1: 172–3.
- 28 Ongania 1886: no. 87: (“Enrico Dandolo mandò da Costantinopli) molte ta(v)ole de marmo et colonne de porfido e marmoro con molto musaico per adornar la giexia de S. Marco.”)
- 29 Choniates 1975: VIII, 623 and X, 647; trans. Magoulas 1984: 321–42 and 357. Niketas Choniates records Morosini’s arrival as Latin patriarch in 1205.
- 30 This evidence is discussed in greater detail in Dale 2009b.
- 31 Bonifacio 1564: fol. 27r, excerpted in Cattin 1990: III, 44.
- 32 Limentani 1972: I [CI].
- 33 Betto 1984: 154, XVIII.

- 34 Rubin 1991: 63–81; Kennedy 1944; Dumoutet 1926.
- 35 Biernoff 2002: 140–4; Mayer 1938.
- 36 For the ways in which seeing and visual memory encompass all of the senses, see Bennett 2001: 7–9. For the physical imprinting of images in eye, imagination and memory, see Biernoff 2002: 95–9; Camille 2000: 209–14; Carruthers 1990: 47–60.
- 37 Demus 1960: 116–17.
- 38 For the most recent proposal that the columns are fifth-century spolia from Constantinople, see Wiegel 2003. See Polacco 1994: 141–7 for previous opinions on dating.
- 39 See Polacco 1994: 129–32.
- 40 As proposed by Volbach in Hahnloser 1965–71: I, 3–4.
- 41 Laurent 1971; and Hahnloser 1965–71: I, 94–101.
- 42 Nelson and Collins 2006: 170–3, no. 20.
- 43 Hahnloser 1965–71: I, 98–100.
- 44 Hahnloser 1965–71: I, 100.
- 45 See Rubin 1991: 63–4, 131–4, 150–2; Dumoutet 1926; Mayer 1938.
- 46 Hager 1962: 59–66, esp. 60, 159; van Os 1984: I, 13–20.
- 47 Schroeder 1937: 236–96.
- 48 For the Mark narrative on the Pala d’Oro see Dale 1994: 63–7.
- 49 Hahnloser 1965–71: I, 39–43, esp. 39–40.
- 50 Hahnloser 1965–71: I, 100.
- 51 See Majeska 1984: 200–6, on the pronaos of St Michael at the south-west corner of the church.
- 52 On the imperial mausoleum at the Pantokrator, see Megaw 1963; and Ousterhout 2001a.
- 53 Sinding-Larsen 1974.
- 54 Dale 2000.
- 55 See Muraro 1970: 46–51; Hahnloser 1965–71: I, 115–19; and Goffen 1994, tav. LXXXIX.
- 56 Belting 1980–1.
- 57 See Cooper 1988: 15–16.
- 58 Moore 1981: esp. 268–72. Sung originally in plainsong, this grouping of psalms was set for two choirs, starting in the sixteenth century. The practice of singing this group of laudatory psalms at Vespers may have begun at the time of the renewal of the Pala d’Oro in the mid-fourteenth century.
- 59 See Pentcheva 2006a: 61–103.
- 60 Limentani 1972: 246–8, pt II, LXXXVII.
- 61 Gallo 1967: 276–87, esp. 279, V. 6: “Iconam unam magnam cum figura Sanctae Mariae cum Filio depinctam, ornatam argento”; 279, V. 10 “Iconam parvam cum figura Sanctae Mariae depictam, ornatam ad smaldum, arg.i.”
- 62 Gallo 1967: 278–9.
- 63 Hahnloser 1965–71: II, 22–3, no. 15; Gallo 1967: 133–55; Schulz 1998; Georgopoulou 2001: 239–43.
- 64 Schulz 1998.
- 65 For the problems of identifying the *Nikopoios* with a single type, see Carr 2000; and Pentcheva 2006a: 75–81.
- 66 Ramusio 1604: 82.
- 67 Noble 2005: 130/1, CXIV.
- 68 For Innocent’s letter excommunicating the Venetians for stealing the icon, see Tafel and Thomas 1856: II, 45; and Gallo 1967: 143.
- 69 Gallo 1967: 143.
- 70 Gallo 1967: 146, 279, no. 6.
- 71 See Brenk 1999.
- 72 Meschinello 1753: II, 21–2; Sansovino 1663: 88, 86, 210–11.
- 73 Brenk 1999: 148.
- 74 See Middeldorf Kosegarten 2002; and Hahnloser and Polacco 1994: 41–7, where it is argued that the ciborium over the high altar was added in 1209 when the paliotto was transformed into an altarpiece.
- 75 Majeska 1984: 215–16. According to this source the icon wept when the Latins tried to take it from Hagia Sophia. Antony of Novgorod (c. 1200) also mentions a weeping Marian icon in the north aisle. Tiepolo 1618: 6–18 suggests that the image taken by the Venetians originally came to Constantinople from Antioch during the reign of Empress Pulcheria, and he identifies it both with the Madonna

painted by St Luke and the *Nikopoios* captured from the Byzantine emperor “Mourtzoupholos” by the Franks.

- 76 Gallo 1967: 146.
- 77 Gallo 1967: 304, no. 14.
- 78 Bonifacio 1564: fol. 18r/5; Sinding-Larsen 2002: 316.
- 79 Bonifacio 1564: fol. 49r; Cattin 1990: III, 143.
- 80 See Georgopoulou 2001: 237–46 for the broader influence of Byzantine icon processions on Venice, mediated in part by its colonies on Crete.
- 81 Fulin 1879–1903: XXI, col. 130; cited by Kurtzman and Koldau 2002.
- 82 Fulin 1879–1903: III, col. 632: “1500, 15 agosto, fo el di de la nostra Dona. Fo fata la procession atorno la piazza e il Patriarcha cantò la messa e fo portata una nostra Dona a torno, si dice fata di man de San Lucha.”
- 83 Gallo 1967: 302–6, esp. 305, no. 14; 306, no. 1.
- 84 Bonifacio 1564.
- 85 See Pentcheva 2006a: 145.
- 86 Pentcheva 2006a: 165–87.
- 87 In an act of 24 August 1589, the Procuratori de Supra advocated that the “immagine della Beata e Gloriosa Vergine Maria” should be placed “nella Capella di Sant’Isidoro sopra l’Altar di esso Santo, concedendosi così alla veneratione verso detta Santa Image per li continui miracoli et innumerabili gratie che ogni giorno ottiene la Città nelle supplicationi a Dio che con essa si fano.” Cited by Gallo 1967: 148.
- 88 See Wiegel 2003; Lafontaine-Dosogne 1996.
- 89 See e.g. Belting 1994: 289.
- 90 Tigler 1995: 87–8, no. 87.
- 91 Tigler 1995: 37, no. 19.
- 92 Demus 1960: 121, 187–8, fig. 35; Belting 1994: 197, 200–1; Maguire 2009. The panel is first recorded in the Porta da Mar by the French pilgrim Jehan de Tournai, who saw it “dessoubz le portal d’icelle eglise” in 1487. Cited in Demus 1960: 187.
- 93 Fulin 1879–1903: XXV, col. 202; cited in Gallo 1967: 146–7, who identifies the “portico” of San Marco with the Cappella Zen.
- 94 Here I draw on Belting 1994: 184–207, esp. 195–207. The most complete accounts of these Marian icons on the interior are provided in Davis 2006.
- 95 Demus 1960: 124; Lange 1964: no. 2, 44–5; Belting 1994: 203; Niero 2006: 131–5, esp. 133–4.
- 96 As reported by Niero 2006: 134.
- 97 See Paribenì 2001; Lange 1964: 43–6, 51–2, 63–7, 76, 109–10, figs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 13, 15, 39; Teteriatnikov 2005: esp. 229–30.
- 98 Maguire 2009.
- 99 Demus 1960: 124; Ongania 1880–93: VI, M. 11, pl. 240.
- 100 Demus 1960: 124; Ongania 1880–93: VI, N. 3, pl. 253.
- 101 Demus 1960: 124–5, fig. 37.
- 102 Belting 1994: 200, fig. 119; Lange 1964: 113, no. 40.
- 103 Demus 1960: 122–3.
- 104 Bonifacio 1564: fol. 10v; Sinding-Larsen 2000: 297, sec. 10/4–5.
- 105 Pentcheva 2006b.
- 106 Hahnloser 1965–71: II, 34–5, no. 24; Klein 2004: 113–15, 139, 156, figs 21a–e.
- 107 Gallo 1967: 25.
- 108 Pastorello 1938: 280, ll. 7–11.
- 109 Riant 1878: II, 225: “Tabula autem in qua de cruce fuit depositus . . . asservatur in monasterio Pantocratoris”; Majeska 1984: 289–95.
- 110 Demus 1984: II, 66–7.
- 111 Belting 1982: 39–41. See also Klein 2004: 278–80, figs 51, 94, 95, 96, 115, 116.
- 112 Belting 1982: 40.
- 113 Pincus 1984; Dale 1994: 87.
- 114 Pincus 1984: 57; Riant 1878, II, 149–52.
- 115 Pincus 1984; Polacco 2002.
- 116 Sinding-Larsen 1974: 199, 211–12.

- 117 Dale 1994: 85–7; Dale 1997: 146–7; Dale 2000.
118 Noble 2005: 100–1, LXXXII.
119 For a deeper discussion of this theme, see Dale 1997; Dale 2009a.
120 Limentani 1972: I, 1, 2–4; Dale 1994: 101.
121 Pertusi 1979.
122 Dale 1997.
123 Mohler 1942: III, 541–3; trans. Chambers and Pullan 1992: 357–8.

PART IV

THE WORLD OF BYZANTINE STUDIES

The people that we now call Byzantines considered themselves Romans, and called themselves “Romaioi.” The use of the term “Byzantine” in modern scholarship dates from the sixteenth century, when, as Diether Roderich Reinsch demonstrates, an interest in the history of what came to be called the Byzantine empire had emerged in Italy. This took place shortly after the fall of Constantinople, and was inspired by the arrival of émigré intellectuals, of which Manuel Chrysoloras was the first of many. Italians learnt Greek and sought classical literature. Only later did Italians embrace the later Roman history of the East as their common history, for example that contained in Prokopios’ *Wars*. As Reinsch explains, we can observe here the production of the first editions of Byzantine historical texts, or more importantly of Latin translations of those texts, including works by Prokopios, where a Latin version was produced as early as 1441, but the Greek original only in 1607. That is to say, mining the histories for details of regional and local history was far more compelling than producing editions, as the list Reinsch has compiled demonstrates.

Still, editions of medieval Greek texts were produced, and the emphasis was on producing a complete run of Byzantine historiography. Interest was spurred by the encroachments of the Ottoman Turks, now masters of Byzantium, who reached the walls of Vienna in 1529. Augsburg, a southern German city which dominated trade between the Ottoman and Habsburg empires, became “the first centre of editorial activity in the field of secular Byzantine historiographical texts.” It was through the commercial family firm Fugger that “the father of German Byzantine studies” was forced into editing Zonaras, for Hieronymus Wolf was private secretary to the nephew of the proprietor of the business. The Augsburgian tradition continued into the seventeenth century, even as other centres emerged, notably Leiden, but subsequently Paris. The first corpus, the *Byzantine du Louvre* (or *Corpus Parisiense*), was edited under the auspices of Louis XIV from 1645 to 1688, and manuscripts flowed into the Royal Library. The complete corpus was reprinted in Venice (1729–33), aimed at a broader readership, even before the last volume was added in 1819. A decade later began the publication of the Bonn corpus, the CSHB. Reinsch sketches its history, bringing us to the present day, and to the CFHB.

The editing of Byzantine texts was not the first choice of the most able philologists. For much of the time since its first use, by Hieronymus Wolf in 1557,¹ the term “Byzantine” has been essentially pejorative. For the educated in western Europe, blessed with a classical education, the term distinguished Rome from her corrupt and decadent successor, a culture that lingered in a state of perpetual decay for more than a thousand years. This was also the sense in Greece, where the leading intellectuals looked to Paris rather than Constantinople. Rigas Velestinlis, who features on the Greek ten euro cent coin, took the French Revolution as his inspiration. His publications included a projected constitution, modelled on the French constitutions of 1793 and 1795, for a new state called the “Hellenic Republic.” It was to be a unitary, not a federal, state which embraced the whole Balkan peninsula and Asia Minor. Sovereignty was to reside in the people, who were to comprise all the state’s inhabitants without distinction of language or religion. However, the official language was to be Greek, as it had been in Byzantium.² There were substantial problems with Rigas’ vision of a restored Byzantine empire, and to serve as a model Byzantium had to be redefined so that it might fit within, and not contradict, the national and nationalist framework of nineteenth-century Greece.³

As Despina Christodoulou shows, in Chapter 31, the Byzantine centuries were considered dark by the leading, if not all, Greek intellectuals of the Enlightenment. For them the classical past prevailed over the Byzantine period for those seeking a model past for the new Greece. Christodoulou focuses initially on Adamantios Korais, who championed the ideal of classical Greece and the example of revolutionary France, was present in Paris in 1789 and believed that modern Greeks, in order to emulate their ancient forebears, could do no better than imitate the French. However, he was not, as is frequently asserted (by those who overstate or misinterpret his use of Gibbon), unremittingly hostile to all things Byzantine, but rather to those that brought the “Graikoroman” empire low. Christodoulou traces a Greek tradition that informed Korais, even as he lived in Paris until his death in 1833.

Korais’ contemporary, but far from a friend, Iakovos Rizos Neroulos, was more dismissive of Byzantium, and as late as 1841 condemned it as “the lowest misery and the stultification of the Hellenes.” By then, Byzantium had begun to play a significant role in Greek life and thought. Christodoulou glances at the work of many lesser thinkers, including Kosmas the Aitolian and Dimitrios Katartzis. However, the greatest provocation to fuller reflection on Byzantium and medieval Greece came from Germany. The thesis of J. P. Fallmerayer, first aired in 1830, posited that modern Greeks were not descended from the ancients, but had been eliminated by massive influxes of Slavs and Albanians, such that any notion of continuity was a fiction. Fallmerayer’s statements were extremely bold and provocative considering how meagre was his basis for making them. For example, and notoriously, he claimed that “not a single drop of real pure Hellenic blood flows in the veins of the Christian population of modern Greece.” By “pure Hellenic blood” he meant that which had flowed in the veins of Perikles and Alcibiades.⁴ Responding to such provocation, Byzantium was embraced in Greece by scholars of philology, linguistics and folklore as the missing link which proved the continuity of Hellenism. Byzantine texts were compiled, edited and published, and Byzantine themes were a commonplace in contemporary literature. Much recent work has explored this Byzantine renaissance.⁵ Most importantly for our purposes, the history of the Byzantine empire

was embraced as a subject worthy of popular reflection and redefined as the history of medieval Greece, the link between the classical past and the national present.

The immediate political context for the emergence of Byzantine studies was a debate over the relative rights of Greeks living within (*autochthons*) and outside (*heteroethons*) the borders of the new Greek kingdom, and the so-called “Great Idea” (*Megali Idea*).⁶ Expounded first and famously in 1844 by Prime Minister Ioannis Kolettis, the great idea was to make all Greeks *autochthons* by extending the borders of the kingdom by force of arms. Although Kolettis did not mention Byzantium, a link was established between the medieval empire and the Great Idea within the prevailing political culture of “Romantic Hellenism.”⁷

The greatest exponents of Greek historical continuity were Spyridon Zambelios and Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos. Zambelios has been credited with devising the tripartite scheme for Hellenic history. He also distinguished between Byzantine history and the medieval history of the Hellenic people: the latter he wished to excavate and separate from the former, to liberate the people from “common slavery, the oft bloody throne, the eunuchs, the rule by women.” His original vision of Byzantium is not so very different from that of Korais, although as Christodoulou reveals, it was not constant. Paparrigopoulos, on the other hand, has become known as the national historian of Greece. Paparrigopoulos’ task, in his *History of the Hellenic Nation*, was to chart the passage of “the Greek nation” (*to ellinikon ethnos*) from origins to emancipation, through the Byzantine era which he rechristened the age of the Hellenic Empire of Constantinople. Initially a mere sketch intended for school-children, Paparrigopoulos’ vision expanded to five volumes for the second definitive edition (1885–7), of which three volumes were devoted to Byzantine history.⁸ Even before this, it had appeared in a French translation, in the preface to which Paparrigopoulos set out his reasons for writing for an international readership. Many readers would be familiar with works “on the Greek people . . . published all the time, of lesser or greater merit, in England, Germany and in France.”⁹

The unity of Hellenic civilization has sometimes been denied, sometimes strongly affirmed . . . But few are those who have admitted that the Greek race never ceased to make a mark on history . . . The purpose of this work is to re-establish the neglected unity of Hellenic civilization, to give to its principal phases their true meaning, to make heard the voice of Greece in the historical trial where she has been judged *in absentia*.

The works with which Paparrigopoulos’ took issue were those by Voltaire and Montesquieu, Le Beau and Gibbon, Fallmerayer and his followers. He would have been far more satisfied with popular historical works that had appeared and would appear subsequently “in England, Germany and in France,” with which Stephenson deals in his chapter. Popular scholarship continued apace, with scholars in Britain (E. A. Freeman), France (G. Schlumberger) and German-speaking lands (F. Gregorovius), offering narratives of Byzantine and Greek history. Stephenson suggests that none was without a political agenda, and it is impossible to understand these visions of Byzantium without placing their development against attempts to resolve the “Eastern Question.” However, he also argues that Byzantium offered a refuge of sorts for scholars who might, in an earlier age, have devoted themselves to

classical studies. These men were driven by the new philology and the demands of *Grosswissenschaft* – in Munich, Heidelberg and, increasingly, Paris – to embrace a less well-known field, where the independent scholar or antiquarian might still dwell safely, at least for a short while.

In the later nineteenth century and through the twentieth, the various visions of medieval Greece, produced by Hellenists both within and without the kingdom, competed with national narratives composed in Bulgaria and the lands of the Southern Slavs, where scholars employed excerpts from Byzantine texts to demonstrate ethnic continuity from the Middle Ages to the modern period. Notable names that deserve to be studied in detail include N. Iorga (Romania) and V. Zlatarski (Bulgaria) – and it is to be regretted that those who were to offer perspectives on Romania and Bulgaria in this volume were unable to do so. One might also consider the impact of Illyrianism in Albania and both Illyrianism and Pan-Slavism in former Yugoslavia. Of the latter, Srđan Pirivatrić, takes Serbia as a case study, in chapter 33, observing how Byzantine studies emerged as an academic discipline under external influence even as it remained central to the formation of national identity for the Serbs. Adopting a prosopographical approach, Pirivatrić begins with those who combed Byzantine sources for information on the Serbian nations and people. It is not until late in the nineteenth century that one finds the first stirrings of interest in the new scientific approach to history, pioneered in German-speaking lands to the north-west. The Romantics fell rapidly under fire from the critical school, whose victory “was strongly felt in the selection of members of the newly established Serbian Royal Academy of Science in 1886.” Yet the two most influential figures in the emergence of critical Byzantine studies in Serbia were a Czech and a German: Konstantin Jireček and Karl Krumbacher. The latter trained a generation of Serbian Byzantinists and medievalists, whose careers Pirivatrić sketches, including Stanoje Stanojević, Vladimir Ćorović, Jovan Radonić, Nikola Radojčić, Dragutin Anastasi-jević, Božidar Prokić and Filaret Granić. The most important Byzantine voice to echo forth from Belgrade, however, belonged to a Russian-born scholar, who fled to Finland, and was trained in Heidelberg and Paris: George Ostrogorsky.

Resident in Belgrade from 1933, and from 1940 head of the Seminar, “Ostrogorsky was the initiator of and driving force behind all [Serbian] initiatives in Byzantine studies during the three post-war decades.” His influence within and beyond the world of Byzantine studies is measured also by Johann Arnason, in chapter 34, who sees Ostrogorsky’s scholarship as replete with comparative sociological perspectives that are never spelt out. Ostrogorsky, whose major thesis Arnason sketches, was the major influence upon Saul Eisenstadt, who first realized the value of the Byzantine empire for comparative study of imperial political systems. As Arnason notes, in an elegant précis of Eisenstadt’s analysis, “Byzantium . . . seems to exemplify, more instructively than most other cases, two aspects of imperial regimes: the ability to build institutions and mobilize resources on a superior scale, characteristic of their ascendant phases, and the regressive dynamics that tend to prevail in the longer run.” Historical sociologists have been slow to follow Eisenstadt, but Arnason has begun to expand upon his elucidations and to locate Byzantium in the broadest of contexts, embracing the competing general histories and distillations produced in recent years, comparing the decline or transformation of the late Roman world to traces of continuity, and relating all to parallel developments in China, Japan and elsewhere.

In this chapter, his critical gaze falls on the discredited notion of “caesaropapism,” to which Gilbert Dagron has recently devoted attention, and in his exploration of the geopolitical centre and the relationship between patriarch and emperor, Arnason returns us to themes with which the volume began, in Michael Angold’s chapter.

Arnason’s central message is that historical sociologists must follow Eisenstadt’s lead, and we might add now his own, to integrate (the latest studies of) the Byzantine World into their analyses. A similar message informs Stephenson’s afterword (chapter 35), which is devoted to the absence of Byzantium in most discussions of Europe’s past by those within and without the academy, notably political scientists and politicians, but also many medievalists. It would appear that Walter Ullmann’s call to establish Constantinople, alongside Rome, as the second pillar of medieval Europe has not yet been heard. But there are hopeful signs, as eloquent and important voices – Averil Cameron, Jonathan Shepard, Evelyn Patlagean – express the need for a wider and fuller appreciation of the other Middle Ages, how it was constructed, and how it has been presented to us. Several post-Byzantine nations – for now, Greece, Cyprus, Romania and Bulgaria – are heirs to the Byzantine World within the European Union. Others will follow, and they cannot remain beyond the pale. The geographical frontiers of Europe’s past have shifted definitively to the East, and the conceptual frontiers must now catch up.

NOTES

- 1 Evans 2004: 5.
- 2 López Villalba 2003.
- 3 Kitromilides 1989.
- 4 Fallmerayer 1830–6: I, iii–xiv. See authoritatively Leeb 1996, and also Veloudis 1970. Bel 1993 places necessary emphasis on Fallmerayer, and Curta 2005 contextualizes his commentary.
- 5 See e.g. Ricks and Magdalino 1998.
- 6 Kitromilides 1989: 165; Clogg 1988.
- 7 Kitromilides 1998: 28.
- 8 Paparrigopoulos 1860–74.
- 9 Paparrigopoulos[s] 1878a: vii–ix.

CHAPTER THIRTY

THE HISTORY OF EDITING BYZANTINE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL TEXTS



Diether Roderich Reinsch

The main historical interest of the great movement in Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which we subsume under the general term “Renaissance” was directed towards the Roman past, but very early on the rediscovery of Greek antiquity, too, gained importance. The study of Roman literature, especially, soon led back to the Greek models and sources. The opportunity of becoming acquainted with the Greek language, works written in that language and translating them into Latin was provided or at least facilitated by contemporary foreign politics. Under pressure from the expanding Ottoman empire on the remnants of the Byzantine empire, many leading figures of Byzantine intellectual life found their way into Italy, first as ambassadors and later on as refugees. These were the first teachers and translators, later also editors of Greek literature in Italy.

The first Byzantine who worked as a teacher and translator in Italy was Manuel Chrysoloras (c. 1350–1415).¹ He originally came to Venice as the ambassador of Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (1391–1425) to ask for help against the Ottoman Turks, but then remained for most of his life in Italy. Chrysoloras taught Greek in Florence for five years before he accompanied his emperor on his long precatory journey around Europe (December 1399–spring 1403). Between 1400 and 1403 he taught in Pavia and Milan, and from 1410 in Bologna and Rome, until he died in Constance (Germany) when he was preparing the council for the Union of the Churches, which was subsequently held in Ferrara and Florence in 1436–8. Aside from his main works, a Greek grammar and a Latin translation of Plato’s *Politeia*, his oral teaching was very important and increased the interest in Greek that was burgeoning in Italy. The pupils Chrysoloras had gathered around him in the great intellectual centres of Italy formed the nucleus from which the study of Greek in Italy then proceeded. The most famous of these pupils, Guarino da Verona, even went to Constantinople to continue and extend his studies.

Chrysoloras was only the first of many Byzantines who flocked to the great Italian Renaissance centres: Rome, Florence, Milan, Naples and Venice. This movement even gained momentum after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, because Byzantine intellectuals now fled in considerable numbers, for example via Crete, to Italy. These refugees brought manuscripts containing the works of Greek authors with them;

they then sold either the books themselves or the copies they had made from them to earn their living. The most important collection of manuscripts that came to Italy this way was the library of Cardinal Bessarion, which formed the nucleus of today's Biblioteca Marciana in Venice. On the other hand, the demand for manuscripts containing Greek literary works resulted in expeditions to Byzantium or, later, to the former Byzantine territories now under Ottoman control. As early as 1425, Giovanni Aurispa returned from the East to Italy with a collection of 238 manuscripts. To mention just one other great enterprise: in 1491–2 Ianos Laskaris undertook two extended journeys to the former Byzantine territories and brought back over 200 manuscripts, most of them extremely precious, for the Medici library in Florence.

Greeks from Byzantium were also the leading figures in transferring Greek literary works from handwritten codices to the new medium of the printed book.² The first printed folio with Greek letters dates from 1469, the first book completely set in Greek font from 1476. And from that time on, editing Greek texts began to flourish in Milan, Florence, Rome, Venice and elsewhere in Italy. Greek editors like Markos Musuros (for the Venetian publisher Aldus Manutius) and Greek publishing companies, for instance the house of Zacharias Kalliergis, also in Venice, played a prominent role in this process.

In this first phase, Byzantine literature did not yet play any role. Apart from Greek grammars, the main interest was concentrated on classical literature in the narrower sense (epic, tragedy, comedy) and on the technical literature of antiquity (rhetoric, philosophy, mathematics, medicine, botany, zoology). If Byzantine works were considered at all, then only as containers of antique remains, for example dictionaries like the *Suda*, Hesychios, *Etymologicum magnum* or the *Anthologia planudea*. If there was any interest at all in genuine Byzantine literary works, it was directed to satire like the *Katomyomachia* of Theodoros Prodromos or to ethical-didactic productions like the “mirror of princes” of Agapetos Diakonos.

Historiography did not attract interest until relatively late, and then once again the classical authors were the first to be printed: Thucydides, Herodotos and Xenophon were printed by Aldus' publishing house at Venice from 1502 onwards; and later on, when interest in Greek antiquity had crossed the Alps, Polybius, Diodorus and Josephus Flavius were printed in the German-speaking area (mainly in Basle). For the German humanists the great Church Fathers of the fourth century, too, were of great interest, because they provided arguments and support for the debate between Reformers and Counter-Reformers. An edition of sixteen orations of Gregory of Nazianzus (prepared by Marcus Musurus) was published by Aldus' publishing house in Venice while translations of several works of Gregory by John Cuno, Beatus Rhenanus and Willibald Pirckheimer as well as translations and editions of John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa and others were published north of the Alps.

All these enterprises were obviously focused on the content of the works as now available and disseminated as printed copies, because in many cases Latin translations of these Greek works were published as a first step while the Greek originals did not yet matter. The same applies to the reception of Byzantine historians, which started with the church historians in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Often, the works of the historians, including the church historian Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, were first published in Latin translation and only later, often

with a delay of many years, the Greek original followed.³ The most striking example for this practice is, for good reasons, Prokopios. His *Wars* (*Bella*) were, of course, of greatest interest for the Italian humanists, because they deal with the history of Italy and focus on Justinian, whose juridical compilations served as the basis for the study of law at the university of Bologna from the thirteenth century onwards. As early as 1441, Leonardo Bruni Aretino translated books V–VIII of Prokopios' *Bella* into Latin, that is, the books which deal with the wars Justinian's armies fought against the Goths in Italy.⁴ The same books were translated again by Cristoforo Persona between 1481 and 1483 (printed in Rome in 1506); books I–IV, which deal with the wars against the Persians and the Vandals, were later translated by Raffaello Maffei Volaterranus (printed in Rome in 1509). The strength of the Italian humanists' factual interest in Prokopios is illustrated by the fact that as early as the fifteenth century the books containing the Gothic wars were also translated into Italian (by Nicolò di Lonigo, preserved in codex Ambrosianus A 272 inf.), and once again in the sixteenth century (by Benedetto Egio, printed in Venice in 1547). The Greek original, however, was only published in 1607, by the German humanist David Hoeschel at Augsburg.

The same holds true for a whole series of other Byzantine historians:⁵ Agathias (Latin translation in 1516: edition of the original text in 1594), Zosimos (1576: 1581/90), Konstantinos Manasses (1573: 1616), Michael Glykas (1572: 1618/60), Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos (1535. 1551: 1630), Ioannes Kantakuzenos (1603: 1645), Laonikos Chalkokondyles (1556: 1615), Georgios Sphrantzes (1604: 1796).

The Italian humanists devoted themselves to the study of Prokopios because they were interested in Justinian's wars against the Goths: they saw them as part of their own history. Another driving force behind the interest in Byzantine historiographical texts was the dispute between the Catholic and the Protestant Churches which emerged north of the Alps at that time. This is the background to the editions prepared by the printer of the king of France Robert Estienne (Robertus Stephanus).⁶ In 1544 he edited the church historians Sokrates, Sozomenos, Theodoretos of Kyrrhos and Evagrius as parts of a corpus of the early church history. Estienne was well disposed towards Protestantism; after his great critical edition of the Bible, he was in permanent conflict with the conservative theologians of the Sorbonne and in 1550 he eventually fled to Geneva, where he embraced Calvinism. His critical interest in the historical development of Christendom is well documented by his editions of fifth-century church historians. Theodoretos had been edited for the first time in 1535, a few years before Estienne, by Hieronymus Frobenius (Froben) and his brother-in-law Nicolaus Episcopus (Niklaus Bischoff), typically enough in Basle. It was in the same year, and in Basle, too, that excerpts of an anonymous Latin translation of parts of Nikephoros Kallistos' work were used by Beatus Rhenanus; a translation of his complete work was produced by Joannes Langus (Johannes Lange) in Basle in 1553. Zosimos, the pagan counterpart of these works which were written from the Christian point of view, was edited by Robert Estienne's son Henri (books I–II, Basle in 1581, the complete work by Friedrich Sylburg, Frankfurt am Main in 1590).

Interest in the secular Byzantine historians was provoked above all by the threat then posed by the Turks to Central Europe. In 1529 they laid siege to Vienna for the

first time.⁷ Byzantium had already succumbed to the Turkish threat, and therefore it was of great interest to learn more about the rise and fall of the Byzantine empire. In addition, some Byzantine historians contained very concrete information about these Teucro-Turks, who, it was held, could be traced back etymologically to Greek antiquity. And the Byzantines themselves were considered twins of the Ottomans. An essayist recently has called the Ottoman empire a “Muslim Byzantium.”⁸ This Muslim Byzantium was, however, not only a military threat but also a trading partner for the West. The centre of the commercial relations with the Ottoman empire was located in southern Germany, in Augsburg, where the powerful business houses of the Fugger and the Welser families resided. They controlled economic relations between the Habsburg and Ottoman empires.

Augsburg was therefore the first centre of editorial activity in the field of secular Byzantine historiographical texts. But first we note the edition of the Greek text of a work by Prokopios which is not a historiographical work in the narrower sense: in 1531 Beatus Rhenanus edited Prokopios’ *De aedificiis* (*On the Buildings*, sc. of Justinian) from a rather deficient manuscript. This edition, too, originated in his deep interest in a writer who had contributed so much information about the assumed national (Germanic) past of the editor. Also in 1531, Rhenanus’ principal work *Rerum Germanicarum libri tres* (*Three Books on German Matters*) came out in Basle, and he re-edited the already existing earlier Latin translations of Prokopios’ *Bella*, together with an introductory essay on the origins of the Goths. Here he unmistakably identifies his contemporaries with the Teutons: “Nostri enim sunt Gotthorum, Vandalorum, Francorum triumphi. Nobis gloriae sunt illorum imperia in clarissimis Romanorum provinciis.” (“Ours are the triumphs of the Goths, the Vandals and the Franks. We are covered with the glory of their empires located within the most famous Roman provinces.”)

In 1553 Hans Dernschwam, a retired manager of the Augsburgian commercial firm Fugger, joined an embassy sent by the Habsburg emperor Ferdinand to Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in Constantinople, led by his new ambassador Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq.⁹ When Dernschwam came back two years later, he brought his patrons, among other things, Greek manuscripts containing John Zonaras’ world chronicle and Niketas Choniates’ *Historia*. Thanks to Dernschwam, Anton Fugger, the proprietor of the banking and commercial house, ordered the private secretary and librarian of his nephew Johann Jakob to translate Zonaras into Latin and to prepare an edition of the original text, and to continue with Choniates, because Choniates’ report started where Zonaras broke off.¹⁰ This librarian, Hieronymus Wolf, whom Hans-Georg Beck once called “the father of German Byzantine studies,”¹¹ thus became a Byzantinist against his will.¹²

For the constitution of the text of Zonaras, five manuscripts were available to Wolf. Of course, one cannot expect that he could have done a real *recensio* on this basis. As generally is the case for these early editions, he based his edition on one leading manuscript, correcting the text here and there “ope aliorum codicum” (“with the aid of other manuscripts”). Wolf had three manuscripts at his disposal for the continuation of the corpus with Niketas Choniates. He followed the same method as with Zonaras: he even took the same manuscript which contains both works as his basis.¹³ Curiously enough, Wolf thought that he was editing not the original text of Choniates, but a later paraphrase. He did not regard this as

problematic, however, because it was the content that mattered. Wolf could also have used the supposed original text of Choniates (in reality a paraphrase with strong elements of the late Byzantine colloquial language) contained in a manuscript bought in 1544 by the senate of Augsburg from Antonios Eparchos.¹⁴ As Wolf stated, he would have been compelled to give up editing this text, because he was not able to manage its linguistic form. Therefore he preferred to edit the supposed later paraphrase, which is in reality the genuine text of Choniates. An artful trick of reason as it were. Wolf's performance as an editor is not judged very favourably by van Dieten, Choniates' modern editor: "The *apparatus criticus* is so unclear that in most cases one does not know what is taken from which codex. The "laboriosa collatio" ("toilsome collation") of three manuscripts he obviously took credit for has done to his edition more damage than benefit."¹⁵ Of course, this judgement presupposes modern standards and possibilities beyond those available to Wolf.

With the editions of Zonaras and Choniates, Wolf had completed (in his own words) a "historiae quoddam quasi corpus" ("something like a corpus of history").¹⁶ His patrons therefore decided to cover the remaining period from 1204 to the end of the Byzantine empire in 1453 in order to create a "corpus integrum totius Byzantinae historiae" ("a complete corpus of Byzantine history"). Anton Fugger offered a manuscript containing the first eleven books of Nikephoros Gregoras' *Roman History* to cover the years 1204–1351, and Laonikos Chalkokondyles was considered a good option for the remaining century up to the fall of the empire. Chalkokondyles, however, was only available in Latin translation, not as a manuscript with the original Greek text.¹⁷ So the second part of the first corpus of Byzantine history comprising the Greek text of Gregoras and Conrad Clauser's Latin translation of Chalkokondyles (which had been published separately in Basle in 1556), was brought out by Oporinus' publishing house in Basle in 1562. The important element here as in the other early editions of Byzantine historians was the Latin translation, because it could be understood by a much wider readership than the Greek original. As the publisher Oporinus stated, he would have been happy to offer the reader the chance to check the Latin translation against the Greek original, but content was more important than language.¹⁸

The same applies to another first edition of a Byzantine historian based on a (now lost) manuscript of the Fuggers' library: Georgios Kedrenos, edited by Wilhelm Holtzmann (Guilielmus Xylander) from Augsburg, published in Basle in 1566. Another formerly Augsburger manuscript (today's cod. Monacensis gr. 48) was the basis for the first edition of Theophylaktos Simokattes prepared by the Jesuit Jacobus Pontanus at the Catholic University of Ingolstadt in 1604.¹⁹

The Augsburger tradition was continued by David Hoeschel (d. 1617), a pupil of Hieronymus Wolf.²⁰ Hoeschel's editions were financed by the other big banking and commercial house in Augsburg, the Welsers, and printed at the printery named "Ad insigne pinus" ("At the trademark of the pinecone"). Hoeschel edited the works of forty-four authors, among them four first editions of Byzantine historiographical works: Photios' *Bibliothēke*, which summarizes among others the works of some Byzantine historians (1601), Konstantinos Porphyrogenitos' *Excerpta de legationibus* (1603), Prokopios' *Bella* (1607) and Anna Komnene's *Alexias* (1610).²¹ In contrast to Wolf's editions, the editions made by Hoeschel do not contain Latin translations of the Greek text, but philological and historical notes instead.

And unlike Wolf, Hoeschel was a capable philologist and a historian who was able to pass sound and well-balanced judgements.

Beside Wolf and Hoeschel, a third German humanist who concerned himself with Byzantine historians should be mentioned: the famous legal historian and orientalist Hans Löwenklau (Johannes Leunclavius).²² He did not edit the Greek text of any Byzantine historian, but he translated three of them into Latin: Zosimos (Basle 1581), Michael Glykas (Basle 1572) and Konstantinos Manasses (Basle 1573).

Leiden in the Netherlands was another important centre for editing Byzantine historians from the end of the sixteenth century up to the year 1618. Bonaventura de Smed (Vulcanius) from Bruges (1538–1614) and Jan de Meurs (Johannes Meursius) from Loozduinen near The Hague (1579–1639) prepared the first editions of Agathias (1594), Konstantinos Porphyrogenitos (*De thematibus* 1588, *De administrando imperio* 1611), Michael Glykas (partial edition 1618), Konstantinos Manasses (1616) and Leo VI (the Wise) (*Tactica* 1612). Johannes Meursius' *Glossarium graecobarbarum* (1610; second edn 1614) was also very important for understanding Byzantine historical texts. These Dutch editors were following the same principle as their predecessors in Augsburg: the basis for an edition was always a leading manuscript which had come into the editor's possession more or less by chance²³ or to which he had access in another way.²⁴ This was, for example, also the case with the first edition of the abbreviated version of Georgios Akropolites by Theodorus Dousa (Leiden 1614).²⁵ The first edition of Ioannes Kinnamos by Cornelius Tollius at Utrecht (Traiectum ad Rhenum) in the Netherlands (in 1652) was based on a copy made by Isaac Vossius in Rome from cod. Vaticanus gr. 163, which had been given to Tollius.²⁶

After the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), Paris became not only the new European centre of political power, but also its cultural and scientific centre. A large-scale *Corpus Byzantinae Historiae*, the so-called *Byzantine du Louvre* (or *Corpus Parisiense*) was edited under the auspices of Louis XIV and under the direction of Philippe Labbé between 1645 and 1688, with supplements issued up to 1819. The corpus consists of twenty-eight volumes, with supplements in another ten volumes, and includes ten first editions. The manuscripts needed for the editions were collected for the Royal Library of France primarily by the great ministers Mazarin, Colbert and Séguier. All the Greek texts of the corpus were accompanied by Latin translations which were either reprinted from an already existing earlier edition or were specially produced by the editors for the corpus. As always when a multitude of editors is involved, the quality of the results differs considerably. Their successors passed positive judgements on Leone Allacci (Leo Allatius), Johannes Boivin, Carolus Du Cange and Carl Benedikt Hase. So Heisenberg called Allatius, who prepared the first edition of the chronicle of Joel (1651) and the first edition of the complete text of Georgios Akropolites (1656), "vir . . . ille doctissimus atque doctrina . . . praeclarissima" ("this highly learned and utterly skilled man").²⁷ And Boivin, who re-edited books I–XI of Nikephoros Gregoras on the basis of the edition of Hieronymus Wolf and added the first edition of books XII–XXIV (1702), was called by Schopen "vir praestanti doctrina et egregia librorum copia instructus" ("a man of outstanding learning who has read a large number of books").²⁸ The revised editions by Du Cange (Ioannes Kinnamos 1670, Ioannes Zonaras 1686, *Chronicon Paschale* 1688) are excellent not so much because of the improvements on the texts but on account

of the notes he added. Hase's achievements in his first edition of Leon Diakonos (1819) were outstanding in both editing and annotating. Other editors of the *Corpus Parisiense*, however, were harshly criticized by their successors; for instance Dindorf gave the following verdict on Jacobus Goar and François Combefis, the editors of Theophanes the Confessor (1655): "mediocri doctrina, artis criticae facultate nulla, neglegentia incredibili" ("men of mediocre learning, of no competence in applying textual criticism at all, of incredible carelessness").²⁹

Between 1729 and 1733, the twenty-eight sumptuously produced volumes of the *Corpus Parisiense* were reprinted in a more modest presentation in Venice,³⁰ the *Corpus Venetum*. The texts, however, did not profit from this new edition, gathering rather more new typographical errors than corrections. Nor can the only first edition of this corpus, the *Regum libri quattuor* of the so-called Iosephos Genesios by Johannes B. Mencken, published posthumously in 1733, be termed a glorious deed of editorial skill.³¹

The next and most ambitious attempt to publish a complete corpus of Byzantine historiography, the so-called *Corpus Bonnense*, saw a shift in focus from history itself to the historians, which is also reflected in the corpus' official title: *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* (CSHB). With fifty volumes published between 1828 and 1897, the *Corpus Bonnense* was the greatest editorial enterprise in the field of Byzantine secular literature undertaken in the nineteenth century. It was initiated by Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776–1831), the universal historian and founder of the modern critical science of history, and was continued under the auspices of the *Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften* (*Prussian Academy of Sciences*) and led by the classical philologist Immanuel Bekker (1785–1871).³² Bekker himself was the editor responsible for twenty-five volumes of the corpus. In principle the *Corpus Bonnense* was to be a revised edition of the *Corpus Parisiense* or the *Corpus Venetum*,³³ but only few editions, for instance those made by the philologists Schopen, Reifferscheid or Büttner-Wobst, were able to meet this standard. In particular the volumes Immanuel Bekker was in charge of rather damaged the editor's scientific reputation, despite the fact that he was an acknowledged classical scholar.³⁴ August Heisenberg once said, according to Franz Dölger, that Immanuel Bekker must have revised the texts "lying on the sofa with the cigar in his mouth."³⁵ If Bekker thought the authors he was 'editing' worth a *praefatio* (which never exceeded one page, though), this is where he utters his displeasure at the job he had taken on and his contempt for the authors and the works he had to edit.³⁶

Therefore the *Corpus Bonnense* in its entirety was criticized very harshly for its philological performance, and rightly so.³⁷ The corpus was, however, very important for the dissemination of the texts of Byzantine historiography. If we look at the lists of the subscribers, we come across addresses from St Petersburg to Rome, many bookshops and secondary school teachers among them. Outside the *Corpus Bonnense*, texts by Byzantine historians were published in several isolated separate editions,³⁸ or more particularly as part of the *Collection Byzantine* of the Association Guillaume Budé in Paris,³⁹ or by the publishing house Teubner in Leipzig.⁴⁰ These editions, typically issued around the year 1900 or later in the twentieth century, were much better in quality than the average ones in the *Corpus Bonnense*.

It was not before time when in the second half of the twentieth century a new

attempt was made to create a great corpus of Byzantine narrative historical sources, this time as an international cooperation under the auspices of the *Association Internationale des Études Byzantines* (AIEB) employing modern standards for editing ancient and medieval texts. Such an edition is based on a careful *recensio* and includes a substantial *apparatus criticus* and a detailed *apparatus fontium* (*et testimoniorum*), *indices* (*nominum*, *rerum ad res Byzantinas spectantium*, *Graecitatis*, *locorum*) and in most cases also a translation (with notes) into a modern European language. This great enterprise of the *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* (CFHB) has made good progress (altogether forty-four titles in fifty-eight volumes from 1967 to the end of 2007),⁴¹ but nevertheless continues. Some editorial problems have by no means been solved satisfactorily even in this corpus, and by way of a conclusion I offer the following observations:

- 1 We must revise the observance of historical orthography, not least with regard to accentuation. Whereas most editors have followed the standardization adopted by classic scholars for their texts, many words have changed their accent, for instance from circumflex to acute; so the Greek forms of Konstantinos or of the title caesar are always written with an acute in our manuscripts, not with a circumflex. Why should we adapt them to the rules for classical texts? Many words written separately in classical texts are represented as one word in our manuscripts. Why should we print them as two words? The rules for enclitics in our manuscripts are not those adapted by classical philologists for their texts either. Why then should we “correct” them?⁴²
- 2 The observance of Byzantine rhetorical punctuation has until now been altered by all editors of the corpus in favour of systems of grammatical punctuation, which are common practice in their respective mother tongues, with the effect that we receive these, by their nature clearly rhetorical texts, in quite another way than the Byzantines did. The systems of punctuation used by Byzantine authors have been studied in a sufficient degree with the help of autographs, at least for the middle and late Byzantine periods. Today nobody who undertakes a critical historical edition of a western medieval text or, let us say, of Goethe, would dare to change an author’s orthography and punctuation so violently. In a great number of cases the sense of a sentence will be clearer with its author’s punctuation than with the modern grammatical punctuation. For the reader a short time of training in the author’s rhetorical punctuation will suffice to give a better understanding and a deeper insight into the rhetorical structure of the texts.⁴³ Byzantine studies are deeply indebted to classical philology, but in this regard they have to step out of its shadow.
- 3 We must abandon the arbitrary treatment of quotations and *similia* in the *apparatus fontium*. There have to be clear distinctions drawn between: real quotations (whether their source is indicated or not by the author); other quotations (whether their source is indicated or not by the author), which have been changed in regard to their wording; and the so-called *similia*, which do not show a special familiarity of the author with a certain text, but only his general literary training in so far as he is using the vocabulary and expressions or phrases that are the common property of Byzantine *litterati* in general, or the *litterati* of the author’s time in particular.⁴⁴

NOTES

- 1 On Chrysoloras and other leading figures, see Geanakoplos 1962; Harlfinger 1989.
- 2 For detailed information, see Koumarianou *et al.* 1986.
- 3 The data concerning the editions of Byzantine historians are collected by Colonna 1956; and Moravcsik 1958.
- 4 Printed in Fuligno in 1470. In this translation Prokopios is not even mentioned as author.
- 5 I do not distinguish between the categories of “historians” and “chroniclers.” For this question, see Beck 1965; Beck 1972; Ljubarskij 1987; Ljubarskij 1993.
- 6 For more on Robert Estienne, see Armstrong 1986.
- 7 See Inalcik 1973: 35–40.
- 8 Brodsky 1987: 427–8, “the Ottoman Empire, alias Muslim Byzantium . . . In purely structural terms, the difference between the Second Rome and the Ottoman Empire is accessible only in units of time.”
- 9 Dernschwam’s and Busbecq’s travelogues contain detailed information about the conditions of life in the Ottoman empire around the middle of the sixteenth century: see Babinger 1986; Ghiselin de Busbecq 1986.
- 10 For details see Husner 1949.
- 11 Beck 1984. On his life see also Beck 1958; Beck 1966a.
- 12 Pinder in Zonaras 1841: I, XXXVIII: “in meae infelicitatis parte numeravi, quod in auctorem luculentiorum non incidissem.” (“I reckoned it to be my misfortune that I did not come across a more splendid author”).
- 13 Now cod. Monacensis gr. 93. See Choniates 1975: L–LI.
- 14 Now cod. Monacensis gr. 450.
- 15 Choniates 1975: CV (“Der kr. App. ist so unklar, daß man meistens nicht weiß, was er welchem Codex entnommen hat. Die “laboriosa collatio” von drei Hss., welche er sich offensichtlich zum Verdienst anrechnete, hat seiner Ausgabe mehr geschadet als genützt”).
- 16 It was financed by Anton Fugger and published by Johannes Herbst (Oporinus) in Basle in 1557.
- 17 The Greek original was edited in Geneva by Johannes B. Baumbach as late as 1615, together with the edition of Nikephoros Gregoras by Hieronymus Wolf (Basle 1562) and the edition of Georgios Akropolites by Theodorus Dousa (Leiden 1614) as part of a corpus titled *Historiae Byzantinae scriptores tres Graecolatini uno tomo simul nunc editi* (*Three Greek-Latin authors of Byzantine History now published in one volume*).
- 18 Characteristically, a pirated edition of this corpus was published without the expensive encumbrance of the Greek texts in Paris in 1566–7.
- 19 See Simokattes 1887, 1972: V. Pontanus had already published the Latin translation (without the Greek original text) of Ioannes Kantakuzenos’ *Historiae* the year before, also in Ingolstadt.
- 20 On him see Schmidbauer 1954.
- 21 Hoeschel edited, without being aware of it, only an excerpt of the first fourteen books of the *Alexias*. He mistook it for the first eight books of the genuine work, because in the manuscript it is subdivided into eight “books” and Hoeschel knew that the entire work consists of fifteen books. See the title of his edition: *Alexiadis libri VIII ab Anna Comnena de rebus a patre gestis scripta*.
- 22 On him see Babinger 1944/5.
- 23 For instance, in the case of Agathias, now cod. Leidensis ex legato Vulcanii 54, see Keydell 1967: XIII. XXXVI–XXXVII.
- 24 In the case of Konstantinos Manasses (cod. Vaticanus Palatinus gr. 124), see Lampsidis 1996: vol. I, pp. XCII, CLV–CLVI.
- 25 For more on this edition and the manuscript it is based on, see Akropolites 1978: I, pp. III, XX–XXI.
- 26 See Meineke 1836: V, XI.
- 27 Akropolites 1978: III–IV.
- 28 Gregoras 1829: I, p. V.
- 29 I quote from Theophanes 1883: I, V.
- 30 In addition to the *Corpus Parisiense* also the chronicle of Ioannes Malalas edited by E. Chilmeadus in Oxford in 1691 based on cod. Bodleianus Baroccianus 182 found its way into the *Corpus Venetum*.
- 31 Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 1978: XXVI.

- 32 See Irmscher 1953; Irmscher 1957.
- 33 Some editions are reprints from other sources, for instance the edition of Konstantinos Porphyrogenitos' *De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae* by Johann Jakob Reiske (Leipzig 1751–4), Bonn 1828–31 (on this occasion parts of Reiske's commentary were published for the first time).
- 34 Unfortunately, the first edition of Michael Attaleiates prepared by Bekker himself in 1853, which was based on a copy of cod. Parisinus Coislin 136 procured for him by Wladimir Brunet de Presle, is no exception. See Pérez Martín 2002: LVIII, LXIII–IV.
- 35 Dölger 1955: 54.
- 36 See Bekker's remarks in his edition of Theophylaktos Simokattes (Bonn 1834): "ipse quia et codicibus carebam manuscriptis et parum assueram generi illi dicendi, quo plane mirifico utitur scriptor ad exemplar antiquitatis ineptissime expressus, satis habui si universa scribendi et interpungandi ratione ad sanitatem propius revocata manifestos duntaxat scribarum typothetarumque errores corrigerem." ("Because I did not have any manuscripts at my disposal and because I knew too little about this sort of language which the author uses in a quite embarrassing way expressing himself foolishly in trying to follow the model of antiquity, I was generally satisfied with returning spelling and punctuation closer to common sense and with correcting at least evident errors of scribes and typesetters").
- 37 See for instance Boissevain 1899: 159: "Let us hope that this fiftieth volume of the collection will be its last. The corpus as a whole has been a mistake from the beginning. It has not even reached the standards that were current in the first half of our century, but now, when Byzantine studies have received such a boost, it is nearly useless for most of the authors edited in it. It is enough (sc. to perceive its inferiority) to compare the Theophanes by De Boor with the text of the *Corpus Bonnense*." (Translated from the German).
- 38 For instance Michael Psellos' *Chronographia* by Konstantinos Sathas, Athens and Paris 1874; Eustathios of Thessalonike's *Capture of Thessalonike* by Theophilus L. F. Tafel, Frankfurt am Main 1832; Kritobulos of Imbros' *Historiae* by Carolus Müller, Paris 1870.
- 39 For instance Michael Psellus' *Chronographia* by É. Renauld 1926–8 and Anna Komnene's *Alexias* by B. Leib 1937–45 (with an index by P. Gautier 1976).
- 40 For instance Prokopios by J. Haury 1905, Theophylaktos Simokattes by C. De Boor 1887, 1972, Theophanes Confessor by C. De Boor 1883–5, Georgios Monachos by C. De Boor 1904, Anna Komnene by Aug. Reifferscheid 1884, Georgios Akropolites by Aug. Heisenberg 1903, revised 1978.
- 41 Two other volumes are in print, twenty-eight are in preparation and one more is planned.
- 42 See the remarks of A. Kambylis in Reinsch and Kambylis (2001): 34*–52*.
- 43 See Reinsch forthcoming.
- 44 See Reinsch 2006.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

BYZANTIUM IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY GREEK HISTORIOGRAPHY



Despina Christodoulou

Byzantium has occupied an ambiguous position in the national history and collective memory of the Greeks. The roots of the current Greek understanding of the historical past can be traced to the mid-eighteenth century, when a distinctly modern Greek identity began to emerge. At the core of this identity, as it took shape over the following decades, was the glorious ancient past; Byzantium was either missing or was its antithesis. In the emerging historical narrative, Byzantium stood for oppression, corruption and decadence, foreign rule and the abuse of the people by the dominant class of emperors, church hierarchs and wealthy notables. This historical discourse was well suited to the dramatic social changes unfolding, which climaxed with the Greek War of Independence in 1821 and the foundation of the modern Greek state. The national name used by the Greeks also underwent transformation: “Romaioi,” with its evocation of Byzantium as the eastern Roman empire, was abandoned and supplanted by “Hellenes.” The ancient race was thus deemed to have been reborn after millennia of foreign rule and oppression, including that of the Byzantine “Romans.”

The most explicit demonstration of this classicizing tendency was the selection of Athens as the new state’s capital. The private Athens Archaeological Society, founded in 1837, and the state Archaeological Service took it upon themselves to uncover the ancient city, even if this meant destroying the strata above the classical layer and although early Christian, medieval and later structures were supposedly protected by law.¹ Iakovos Rizos Neroulos, president of the Athens Archaeological Society and government Minister for Religious Affairs and Education, expressed the ideology dominant among the cultured elite in a vibrant speech he gave on the Acropolis at the Archaeological Society’s annual meeting in 1841. Neroulos eulogized the “revival” of the Hellenes after twenty centuries of slavery and lethargy. Byzantine history, however, he proclaimed to be “a long and almost continuous series of foolish practices and shameful violent acts,” and “a most dishonourable record of the lowest misery and the stultification of the Hellenes.”²

This was a narrowly proscribed view of the past, however, and one not sufficiently flexible to cover the evolving political, psychological and emotional needs of the Greek people. By the mid-nineteenth century it would be challenged in vociferous

and unpleasant debate. A novel historical model would gradually take its place, a tripartite schema of history wherein ancient, medieval and modern were tightly linked chains unified through geographical space and time.³ The pioneer of this model was Athens university professor Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, for whom Byzantium was not simply an equal element: it was the core of Greek history that legitimated the new Greek state's aspirations for its future. Along with amateur historians such as Skarlatos Vyzantios and Spyridon Zambelios, Paparrigopoulos set about to dismantle the system of historical thought that excluded Byzantium and replace it with a new system that projected the unity of the Hellenic nation through space and time.

Iakovos Rizos Neroulos' hard-hitting disdain for the Byzantines, especially as a negative contrast to the ancients, is also found scattered liberally throughout the writings of Adamantios Korais. These two were certainly not admirers of each other's work – Neroulos had published a play in 1813 entitled the *Korakistika* in which he lampooned Korais' proposed language reforms – demonstrating that such anti-Byzantine sentiment was not merely the preserve of particular intellectual circles but was a widespread sentiment among the social and cultural elite at least. Korais, "the most celebrated of living Greeks, at least among the Franks,"⁴ was the pre-eminent protagonist of the so-called "Neohellenic Enlightenment."⁵ Born into a merchant family in Smyrna in 1748, Korais spent the majority of his life outside Greece and the Ottoman empire, primarily in Paris, where he lived from 1784 until his death in 1833. In the city of light, Korais established himself as an internationally recognized classical scholar. More pertinently, he attempted to initiate a cultural "renaissance" among Greeks and organize his fellow countrymen against their Ottoman overlords through his prolific pamphleteering, voluminous correspondence and, from 1805, his seventeen-volume *Hellenic Library* intended to be used in the Greek schools of the Ottoman empire and Europe. This was a series of editions of ancient Greek authors prefaced by lengthy prolegomena in which Korais outlined an agenda for Greek national revival, with strategies for an education system and development of the Greek language, including recommendations as to which authors young Greeks should read and which they should most definitely avoid.⁶

For Korais, Byzantine history was marked by corruption, in both linguistic and moral terms. But he still saw it as an element of *Greek* history. In the prolegomenon to his collection of Aesop's *Myths* he outlined an almost continuous Greek literary history, from antiquity through to the present. The ancient standards were wondrous, but a steady decline set in from the fourth century AD. The ninth century had some bright spots, namely "the exceedingly polymath Patriarch Photius . . . and his student Michael Psellos," but it was also the century of the birth of the deacon and Magistros pseudo-Ignatius, also known as Gabrias, whose work was full of "[b]arbarisms, solecisms, misuse of words, and unclear in much and most dark."⁷ The emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos was a "friend of education and protector of art lovers," but even he was unable to dissolve the darkness of ignorance (*amatheia*) that had now clearly settled over Greek letters, and "the darkness thickens further." The twelfth century was "perhaps the most inglorious" period for Greece: "Philosophy was no longer heard; Greek philology, without the lamp of philosophy, did not know in which direction it was going, and the *koine* language of the people . . . went from bad to worse."⁸

Korais did, however, have an intriguing interest in the rather obscure poet Ptochoprodromos, and this because two of his works were written in the “*koine*” spoken language of the *Graikoi*.⁹ These poems may make us feel disgust, Korais comments, but they are of historical interest as they indicate the level of the corruption of both language and morals at that time.⁹ They provide us with a little consolation, he continues, as we can see that today our language and our morals are greatly improved.¹⁰ Volume one of Korais’ *Atakta* of 1828 is dedicated to Ptochoprodromos, with almost 500 pages of detailed notes and commentary accompanying only sixty pages containing two poems. In the prolegomenon – written several years after the outbreak of the War of Independence when an autonomous Greece had already been carved out and the first constitutions of the burgeoning Greek state drawn up – Korais no longer needs to advocate a Greek cultural revival as a “reborn” Greece is now a political entity. His ire is instead directed at the pope and the Jesuits for the Crusades and the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204. He fulminates against monarchy as the political form of the emerging independent Greek state, drawing upon a litany of disastrous Byzantine emperors to illustrate his point. Gibbon is a recurring source for this text, and it is Gibbon whom Korais cites to verify his polemic against the Byzantine emperors, Alexios Komnenos above all, for desiring to acquire the trappings of the Persian and Parthian courts and filling the Byzantine court with eunuchs.¹¹ “According to the Englishman Gibbon . . .” is frequently found in footnotes and main text.

Korais’ greatest venom is, however, reserved for the Latin rite, the Church of Rome and the Jesuit order. In comparison with them, the Byzantine emperors and priests were positively progressive, although Korais can still not forgive the hedonism and debauchery of the latter for the collapse of Byzantium:

the monks and clergy of the eastern Church, compared with the then and later popes, high priests, clerics and monks of the West, should be considered saints, even if they did scandalize the laity with their dissolute behaviour, and hasten, with their increasing common superstition, the collapse of the Graikoroman empire.¹²

Korais’ problem, then, is not with the Byzantine, or “Graikoroman,” empire *per se* – indeed, its collapse is a source of regret for him – but with those who administered it, whose antics led to its destruction, and with the West. Moreover, he uses Gibbon here not as evidence for the debauchery of Byzantium but to demonstrate that the Byzantines were superior to the West: “Gibbon, the unrelenting critic of the easterners and the westerners, is however forced to admit that the bishops of the East, compared with the western bishops, can be judged as the genuine successors of the apostles.”¹³ This brings us to the oft-repeated claim, stated as such an obviously verifiable truth that it is never verified,¹⁴ that Korais’ anti-Byzantinism was due to the influence of western authors, most notoriously Gibbon. Yet, it is only in this late commentary on Ptochoprodromos that we find Korais’ first extant reference to Gibbon, despite his having spent almost the past forty years publishing attacks on Byzantium. Moreover, Korais cites Gibbon in a *defence* of Byzantium, to show its superiority to the West. Nor is he a mindless reader of Gibbon, simply reproducing and emulating him. Korais in fact edits Gibbon when quoting him, to delete the

section most denigrating to the Greek cause: he omits Gibbon's notion that the Church of Rome was "less degenerate perhaps than the Greeks in the worship of saints and images,"¹⁵ simply inserting the three dots of an ellipsis.

The absence of any previous reference to Gibbon in Korais' published works and the date of the prolegomenon suggest that it was in fact not until the second edition of François Guizot's French translation of Gibbon, published in 1828, that Korais actually read Gibbon and became significantly familiar with his work. In one of the few actual studies to explore Korais' putative attachment to Gibbon, Stergios Fassoulakis acknowledges that there is little evidence to "justify" the "assertion" that "Korais' attitudes derive directly and exclusively from Gibbon." Yet, Fassoulakis still insists that the "grounding of Korais' perception, then, is to be found not only in the conceptual framework of the eighteenth-century historians, chiefly Montesquieu, Voltaire and Lebeau, but also in that of the more recent Gibbon."¹⁶

I would suggest that this is not the case. Rather, Korais' hostility towards Byzantium had distinctly Greek roots. Indeed, there was another tradition of Greek writing hostile to Byzantium yet which could hardly be described as having been influenced by western attitudes – that of the Church. A range of works emerging from church circles around this time were not simply critical of Voltaire and his Greek followers, but also of Byzantium. The pamphlet *Fatherly Teachings* of 1798, for example, purports to have been written by the patriarch of Jerusalem. God, he writes, "raised out of nothing this powerful empire of the Ottomans, in the place of our Roman Empire which had begun, in a certain way, to cause to deviate from the beliefs of the Orthodox faith."¹⁷

A similar position is taken by the monk and preacher Kosmas the Aitolian (1714–79), who in contemporary Greek collective memory is considered a forerunner of the Greek War of Independence. His history of the Romaioi reads thus:

When 300 years had passed since the crucifixion of our Christ, our most merciful Lord sent St Constantine and he set up a Christian kingdom and the Christians had the kingdom for 1,150 years. Then God removed the kingdom from the Christians and brought the Turk from Anatolia and gave it to him for our own good . . . God knew that the other kings would harm our faith and that the Turk does not harm us.¹⁸

The belief that Byzantium fell because the Byzantines had "sinned" was also shared by those who did not see the Ottomans as protectors. The Amsterdam-based merchant Ioannis Pringos wrote despairingly in his diary in 1768: "My Lord, have we had enough of your fury, be forbearing, have our sins not yet sufficed for you to liberate us, O Lord? We have angered your benevolence and for this you have made us subject to such a wild beast, the impious Hagarene."¹⁹

The first real *defence* that we find of Byzantium is from a treatise by Dimitrios Katartzis (1730–1807), an official in the Wallachian court, counselling the youth on which "Frankish" and Turkish books they should read. Katartzis mocked those Greeks who "read the General History of Voltaire, and the Philosophy of History . . . before reading a book from the *Byzantis*, the history of their race."²⁰ He also attempted to construct a Greek national history, although one quite different from that of Korais:

When a Romios contemplates that he descends from Perikles, Themistokles and other such Hellenes, or from the relatives of Theodosius, Bellisarius, Narses, Boulgaroktonos, Tsimiskes, and other such great Romaioi, or that his family derives from some saint or a relative of his, how can he not love these great men and their descendants?²¹

It is possible to interpret Katartzis as here providing evidence of an “indigenous Greek” pre-independence, pro-Byzantine tradition. Yet, his historical knowledge of Byzantium came through a very western filter. *Byzantis* was the collective term used by Greeks for the series of Byzantine editions produced by the Louvre, the *Corpus Byzantinorum* between 1648 and 1729, including the abridged 1729 Venice edition in twenty-three volumes and perhaps even a six-volume modern Greek translation of the 1767 Venice edition by Ioannis Stanos.²² Rather than offering a simple translation, however, Stanos used the *Corpus Byzantinorum* for his own purposes. As his publisher, Demetrios Theodosius, explained in the foreword to volume one, the purpose of this translation is to:

make a clear selection of the most accurate and reliable of the historians who constitute the great and exhaustive corpus of *Byzantis*, and to order them . . . in such a way so that all can gain a clearer idea of things, when they are arranged as they followed each other, which order we do not find in the aforementioned collection of *Byzantis*.²³

Rather than mindlessly adopting supposed western anti-Byzantine sentiments, Greek intellectuals of the late eighteenth century were clearly able to appropriate the formalized knowledge made available by western scholarship and to adapt it to a specifically Greek historical narrative. As such, the encounter with western discourse on Byzantium might more fairly be judged as having produced an interest, even a curiosity, in Byzantium and provided a framework in which it could be approached. Indeed, the anonymous 1795 translator of Montesquieu’s *Researches into the Progress and Fall of the Romans* – one of the works most often accused of having caused Greek antipathy towards Byzantium – was inspired by this work to ask questions and seek answers on the origins, development and fall of Byzantium, rather than to despise it.²⁴

* * *

The War of Independence which broke out in 1821 led over a decade later to the establishment of a monarchy in Greece.²⁵ The foreign monarch selected by the protecting Great Powers of Britain, France and Russia was young Otto of Wittelsbach, son of King Ludwig I of Bavaria. Since Otto was only seventeen years old, a regency comprised of three Bavarians ruled the country until he came of age in 1835. Otto’s father, Ludwig, was a lover of Greek antiquity, and had apparently hoped to see ancient Greece reborn in Munich and subsequently in Athens even before the outbreak of the war and his own family’s direct relationship with Greece.²⁶

Otto’s desire was to see Munich as the “Athens on the Isar,”²⁷ and to this end he had a number of neo-classical buildings constructed when still crown prince. Their principal architect was Leo von Klenze, who designed the Walhalla temple, the

Glyptothek and the Pinakothek. Ludwig was also very much behind the choice of Athens as the capital of a “reborn” Greece, and he sent von Klenze to Athens to draw up a town plan for the city, although this was never implemented.²⁸ The “neo-classical” architectural style dominated the new Athens, as seen in many of the public buildings constructed from the 1830s to the 1850s, such as the University, Library, Academy, the Royal Palace and the Archaeological Museum. Even the Metropolitan cathedral was built, at Otto’s request, not according to the traditional Byzantine church architectural style but according to a neo-classicizing “Hellenobyzantinon” order.²⁹

Yet, Byzantium was a useful resource for Otto, and one that both he and Ludwig warmly adopted. In his memoirs Nikolaos Dragoumis recounts that one of the terms Ludwig had set for Otto’s crowning was that it “adhered in an unchanged manner to all the customs of the eastern Church, just as had happened under the emperors.” More intriguingly, an order was given in Munich to make a grand crown, sword and sceptre, while in Greece “they researched the practice in Byzantium before the fall.”³⁰ Clearly, Otto was excited at the thought that not only did he embody the rebirth of classical Greece but that he was the successor to the Byzantine throne. Such Byzantine imperial imagery and regalia were not merely a matter of personal taste but were calculated to legitimate Otto as a foreigner and a monarch – a prospect for Greece that Korais had fulminated against – in the eyes of the Greek people and to mobilize them around him in the campaign to expand the borders of his kingdom.

It also appears that it was Munich which had pushed for the choice of Athens as capital of the new Greece. The capital under the governor Ioannis Capodistrias, during the final years of the War of Independence and the early 1830s, had been the Peloponnesian town of Nafplion. For various reasons, however, it was now considered not suitable as a permanent capital. During a privy council discussion in 1833, the majority of government ministers believed that a town along the Isthmus, such as Corinth or Megara, was the best choice for a new capital of Greece, and only one opted for Athens. Alexandros Mavrokordatos, Minister of Finance, for example, argued in favour of the Corinth Isthmus as an excellent location, although he was aware that “educated Greeks agree with the choice of Athens.”³¹ Ioannis Kolletis, Minister for Shipping, argued that no permanent capital be built, only a temporary one selected:

The capital of the Kingdom of Greece must be Constantinople. It is the city where the foundations of the throne of our old emperors are located and the seat of our religion, the city upon which we should all turn our eyes . . . we should not desire any capital other than Constantinople.

The present condition of the Ottoman empire and the latest events in Asia and European Turkey are sufficient for us to understand that this choice is the wish of Divine Providence. The throne of Muhammad is crumbling.³²

Kolettis’ conviction that Divine Providence would soon make Constantinople available to the Greeks was clearly mistaken, but one of his arguments against making Athens the capital was prescient: “why should we choose the city of Athens, and bury the grand and artistically perfect ancient monuments for the second time under new buildings?” Kolettis believed that if Athens were to be made the capital, then the

hope would be lost “for both us and the foreigners” of showcasing the ancient monuments as a model for future generations and which would “strengthen the glory of the national spirit.”³³

Kolettis’ own choice for temporary capital was the Peloponnesian town of Megara, and some claimed the reason behind his preference was because Byzantium had been an ancient colony of Megara.³⁴ Even so, Kolettis’ fondness for Constantinople as the throne of the old emperors did not preclude his appreciation of classical Athens and the ways in which the city’s ancient monuments could be used to promote Greece abroad. Yet, despite Kolettis’ views regarding Constantinople and what it represented historically and culturally to the Greeks, Byzantium was still suppressed from any coherent kind of national history. And this at a time not only a new capital was being constructed but also when debates around national history were becoming more urgent now that Greece had its own schools and university, all of which needed an official, national educational programme.³⁵

On 3 May 1837, the day of the foundation of the university of Athens, Konstantinos Schinas, the university’s first dean and professor of history, in a direct address to King Otto recounted the travails of the Hellenic nation over the millennia. In the “heroic years” Greece had been fragmented into a number of autonomous cities, which then lost their autonomy to the Macedonians. They were subsequently conquered by the Romans under Mommius, who bequeathed them to the “successors” of Rome, the Byzantine emperors. Four hundred years ago, Greece had been unbearably enslaved. “Hellas, your Highness,” Schinas continued:

was never an autonomous and indivisible state, but was first small in size and fought with adjoining states, and then a small province of three successive large monarchies, of which only with that of Byzantium did it have so much as language and faith in common.³⁶

Vaggelis Karamanolakis, in his otherwise commendable study of the development of historical studies at the university of Athens, explains this perspective of Greek history as “expressing a common view of the era as it had been formulated by Edward Gibbon and which had much influence in western thought.”³⁷ But, any reading of Gibbon shows that Schinas’ history is quite removed from that of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Moreover, Schinas’ vision of a historically fragmented Hellas would soon be abandoned. From the mid-nineteenth century a quite different historiographical model began to be developed, which posited three successive eras, ancient, medieval Byzantine and modern, with the Byzantine era as a crux in the development of a unified Greek nation. The two figures most identified with this effort were Spyridon Zambelios and Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos: Zambelios, so the story goes, introduced this tripartite conceptualization, while Paparrigopoulos refined and fought for it, the climactic result being his five-volume *History of the Hellenic Nation*, published between 1860 and 1874. Yet, although there was much interaction between the two authors and their work, their views on Byzantium and its position in a Greek national history differed markedly, at least at first. More pertinently, in the evolution of their own work, dramatic transformations can be seen in their personal attitudes towards Byzantium.

Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos was born in Constantinople in 1815, dying in

Athens in 1891 after having enjoyed a long, successful and polemical career as an academic and very vocal public figure. Konstantinos Schinas had been his patron, helping a young Paparrigopoulos to secure his first job in the Ministry of Justice in 1834. This job he was forced to abandon a decade later when the constitutional reform banning *heteroethons*, Greeks from outside Greece, from serving in the civil service was passed. Between 1846 and 1850 Paparrigopoulos taught at the Athens Gymnasium school. Schinas again supported Paparrigopoulos in his, initially unsuccessful, application for a history lectureship at the university in 1850.³⁸

In one of his first forays into historical research, Paparrigopoulos stuck faithfully to the historical model outlined by Schinas. This was an article published in 1844 and entitled *The Last Year of Greek Freedom* in which he attempted to demonstrate that Corinth had fallen to the Roman general Mummius in the year 145 BC, not 146 BC as generally believed. When he republished this article in 1858, in volume one of his *Historical Treatises*, a number of discreet but drastic changes had been made. The new title was now *Fall of Corinth to Mummius*. Whereas the 1844 opening line spoke of a “Hellas, already free . . .” continuing with “[I]f we look closely into the study of our slavery . . .”³⁹ the 1858 opening line read “Hellas, having reacquired part of her freedom . . .” continuing “[I]f we look closely into the study of this period . . .”⁴⁰ It was not only Paparrigopoulos’ concept of dating and historical periods that had changed in the intervening years. There had also been a shift in his political thinking, not simply in terms of when Greece was either free or enslaved in the past, but in how only part of Greece was now free today.

We can trace this paradigmatic shift elsewhere in Paparrigopoulos’ work. In the earlier part of his career he had dedicated himself to the publication of school history textbooks. His 1845 translation/adaptation *Elements of General History according to the System of the Frenchman Lévi* resulted in a clash between him and the Athens Gymnasium schoolteacher Grigorios Pappadopoulos. The Ministry of Education had issued a circular to the effect that Paparrigopoulos’ book should be used within schools. Pappadopoulos refused to do so and was transferred elsewhere, with Paparrigopoulos eventually filling his vacated teaching position. There ensued a pamphlet war between the two. Pappadopoulos’ grievance was that the *General History* did not contain enough of the “history of the eastern Orthodox empire . . . as for middle history, the Byzantine is worthy.” We, he continued, must be taught the history of our ancestral throne, as it is connected to our later history.⁴¹ Paparrigopoulos defended his book thus:

It is true that the history of the eastern Orthodox empire is presented synoptically; it is not, however, true that it constitutes our middle ancestral history . . . Middle Hellenic history constitutes middle Hellenic history . . . This middle Hellenic history should be taught by us and not the Byzantine.⁴²

The evolution of Paparrigopoulos’ views became even more apparent in his following work, the *Textbook of General History*. Volume two – three were intended, only two produced – was published in 1852 on the medieval period. It contains an intriguing note by the publisher, Andreas Koromilas, addressed to the reader, the “studying youth,” that its contents relate to the “strange and difficult to interpret history of the Middle Age.”⁴³ In the prologue, Paparrigopoulos cites some of his

sources, all foreign historians, such as Schlosser and Thirlwell (this was a general history, not a specifically Greek one). And, most pertinently given the extent to which Paparrigopoulos was already at this period becoming ill-disposed to him, “for the Byzantine epoch, Fallmerayer.”⁴⁴

This was a productive time in terms of schoolbooks for Paparrigopoulos, with the original slim volume of the *History of the Hellenic Nation* being published the next year. The “history of the Hellenic nation” is herein divided into five periods: (1) antiquity, “the most famous part of the history of the Hellenic nation;” (2) 145 BC to AD 476, when Hellas was under the foreign rule of the Romans; (3) AD 476 to 1453, when “the Hellenic nation was again free and acquired its own kings, whose capital was Constantinople;” (4) 1453–1821, when the Hellenic nation was again subject to foreign rule, that of the Ottoman Turks; and (5), the longest section, from 1821 until today, when the Hellenic nation once again gained its freedom.⁴⁵ Theodoros Manousis, the other professor of history at the university, found this historical schema most peculiar. In his report to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education, Manousis commented that Paparrigopoulos had not “remained within the currently established boundaries of Hellenic history until the loss of Hellenic autonomy . . . but has dragged into this cycle other elements, which are not usually considered parts of it, for example, the Byzantine state.”⁴⁶ The report was counter-signed by Stephanos Koumanoudes, poet, lexicographer, professor of Latin, secretary of the Athens Archaeological Society and much more.

* * *

As Michael Herzfeld has noted of Spyridon Zambelios, the little we do know of his life “shows a cosmopolitan Heptanesian intellectual of distinctly hot temper.”⁴⁷ Of a similarly fiery disposition was Stephanos Koumanoudes, who took such offence to the emerging historical approach to Byzantium that he perceived Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos to be promoting that he coined the term “Zambeliopaparrigopouleios,” defining it as a “historical school” in an attempt, presumably, to portray such theories as belonging to a lunatic fringe.⁴⁸ Koumanoudes was correct to assume a close connection between Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos, despite their distinct differences. Born in Lefkada in around 1813, Zambelios produced the historical works by which he first became known in the United States of the Ionian Islands, then not a part of Greece but under British protection. He was of a prominent family and even served in the Ionian Island parliament, while his father Ioannis was a distinguished playwright and great admirer and personal acquaintance of Adamantios Korais.⁴⁹

Primarily through his two lengthy works *Folk Songs of Greece* (1852) and *Byzantine Studies* (1857) Spyridon Zambelios is regarded as having laid the foundations of contemporary Greek national historiography, battling dynamically for the inclusion of the Hellenism of the Middle Ages within a tripartite schema. These are, however, complex works, difficult to read and with convoluted arguments. Moreover, there are significant differences, almost a tension, between the two works. In the *Folk Songs of Greece* Zambelios expressed his opinion of Byzantium thus:

In Byzantine history we rarely find traces of the people . . . The monarchy of Constantinople, from the beginning until the fourteenth century, with a few exceptions, is so alienated from the national inclinations of the subjects, that it

does not protect Hellenism, only towards its end . . . A barrier, then, between the *demos* and the *basileus*, a chasm between Church and court. As a consequence of this division, two different political histories are presented to us, one which refers directly to the Roman empire, relating entirely its fortunes, as such, it remains completely foreign or at least external to the nation; and the other, indirectly or obliquely, refers exclusively to Hellenism, noting the terms of its existence and the levels of its development.⁵⁰

Zambelios' distinction between Byzantine history and the medieval history of the Hellenic people is emphatic: these are two different histories. What he was seeking was the cultural history of the people, not of the kings who tyrannized them. In the sense that he considered Byzantium as represented by the emperors, Zambelios was very much continuing the anti-Byzantine tradition exemplified by Korais. There is not a great difference between Spyridon Zambelios' notions of Byzantium in *Folk Songs* and those of his playwright father Ioannis, who felt "repulsion when reading the history of the Middle Ages or the eastern empire . . . the common slavery, the oft bloody throne, the eunuchs, the rule by women."⁵¹ What was truly novel in *Folk Songs* is that Zambelios did not view the medieval period as a chasm or as one of decline, moral and cultural, but attempted to engage with this era and to uncover the medieval Hellenism that he believed had been obscured by the monstrosity of Byzantium. The full title of the work was *Folk Songs of Greece Published with a Historical Study of Medieval Hellenism*: Zambelios believed that the study of this "dark and unexplored historical epoch" and of "medieval life" was of necessity for gaining an "aesthetic flavour" of contemporary Greek folk songs.⁵² The problem for Zambelios was not so much with the notion of a medieval period, but with what was seen as its corrupt, oppressive and seemingly foreign leadership. Hellenes may still have existed in this period, but they were enslaved and thus stigmatized and regarded as not worthy of attention. Zambelios' innovation was actively to seek out the oppressed Hellenes of the Byzantine period. In this sense, he is highly critical of the *Byzantis*, believing that these chronicles told the story only of the court and not of the people.⁵³

In his review of *Folk Songs* for the periodical *Pandora*, Paparrigopoulos praised Zambelios for challenging the notion that the Hellenic ethnos had been extinguished in the Middle Ages, but takes issue with him for considering "the monarchy in Byzantium to be a *foreign element*, and the only national elements to be the people and the Church."⁵⁴ When Zambelios' second major work, the tellingly titled *Byzantine Studies*, was published five years later in 1857, his view on the Byzantine monarchy had undergone what can be described as a "rearrangement." The emperors were now no longer a foreign element but part of an organic whole. Zambelios proposes to conduct an autopsy on the body of the "Hellenic middle age" and to examine its vital organs: religion was the head, language the lungs, and the throne and legislation of old Rome the legs.⁵⁵ This is a distinct development from the views he held only five years earlier: the barrier between the people and the emperors has fallen, the chasm filled. As the title of the work itself indicates, all this was now Byzantium.

Spyridon Zambelios had settled briefly in Athens in 1856. He continued to publish in *Pandora*, a leading literary and cultural periodical co-edited by Paparrigopoulos,

and in the French-language periodical *Le Spectateur de l'Orient*, with which Paparrigopoulos was also involved.⁵⁶ It is tempting to speculate, then, that Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos were personal acquaintances who would meet to discuss Byzantium. Paparrigopoulos may thus have played a direct role in the shift in Zambelios' attitudes towards the Byzantine emperors, both through his critical review of *Folk Songs* and his personal contact with Zambelios.

Spyridon Zambelios was not the first of Paparrigopoulos' broader circle to have attempted to revise attitudes towards Byzantium. In 1851, a year before the publication of *Folk Songs of Greece*, volume one of Skarlatos Vyzantios' mammoth *Konstantinoupolis* was published. Two further volumes followed in 1862 and 1869. The first volume was dedicated to the area within and around the walls of Constantinople, a truly complex and meandering work of over 600 pages. In the prologue Vyzantios recounts the overwhelming effort he made just to get even the smallest of details right, as "through the knowledge of each of these the history of the Byzantine epoch is made clearer, which comprises an integral and most essential part of the whole of our national history."⁵⁷ Even so, he still adheres to the position that there was something "wrong" with Byzantium, suggesting that Greeks limit discussion of whatever is reprehensible, even suppressing the nasty aspects of the Byzantines. On the other hand, they should highlight those things that are praiseworthy, which outnumber the negatives, as one can learn about in an unprejudiced manner from the *Byzantis*.⁵⁸

Stephanos Koumanoudes reviewed *Konstantinoupolis* and took issue with its author over the argument that Greeks should avert their eyes from the reprehensible aspects of their Byzantine "fathers."⁵⁹ This evolved into a vitriolic "pamphlet war" between the two men, particularly on the part of Koumanoudes, who was clearly attempting to humiliate Vyzantios, with pedantic, over-detailed analyses of the latter's imputed errors.⁶⁰ In one important aspect, however, Koumanoudes was right: a historian should never cover up aspects of history simply because they are deemed unpleasant. His attitude towards the *study* of Byzantium – as opposed to Byzantium itself, which he unambiguously considered a horror – was complex, even contradictory. He wishes, for example, that "we could acquire a complete corpus of the cultural writings of the Byzantines. From this would come a true knowledge of our history."⁶¹ For Koumanoudes, Byzantium was still "our history," it should be studied, even in a brutally honest fashion. But, it was riddled with bad things and, as such, should have no real part in a Greek national history, which concerned antiquity and its modern projections.

Koumanoudes had the opportunity to articulate publicly his own views on the history of the Hellenes when he was selected by the Athens University senate to give the university's annual anniversary speech in 1853. His chosen theme was the unity of the Hellenic nation, which he explored historically. Unlike many, he did not comprehensively condemn Roman rule, believing that although there were moments when it was strict, there were also moments when it was relaxed.⁶² Indeed, Koumanoudes believes that Hellenic unity crystallized in the Roman period, when the regional communities (*koinēs*) were established. The word "Panhellenic" was heard often under the Romans, dying out in Byzantine times, he argued. Art and letters declined when the capital of Rome was moved to Constantinople, being finally killed off by barbarian raids and despotic Byzantine rule. Koumanoudes fires a few shots at those attempting to rehabilitate Byzantium,⁶³ believing that those who delve into the

darkness of “our national life” during the medieval period may be worthy, but only those who use clear and indisputable facts producing safe and irrefutable conclusions that can be used to found a social system are worthy of national praise. Anything else could potentially harm the future of the Hellenic *phyles* (tribes, races) and their freedom.⁶⁴ Koumanoudes believes that “certainly there was a Hellenic nation throughout the medieval era; we are the proof.” But, “either there was an absence of a sense of a political existence among the people, or they were in a deep sleep.”⁶⁵ For Koumanoudes, the fall of Byzantium to the Turks was the greatest disaster, but it also provided the springboard for the rebirth of the Greeks: “*Hellenic letters were reborn in the West*” (his italics). Hellenism in the West was thriving and spreading salvation throughout Europe, and it was the teachers and merchants operating there who decided on the *anastasi* (resurrection) of the race, which had been sleeping for over one thousand years.⁶⁶

Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos’ five-volume *History of the Hellenic Nation*, the first edition of which came out between 1860 and 1874, is often described as “monumental,”⁶⁷ but in many ways its success lay in its simplicity. The first two volumes covered antiquity until the Roman period, volumes three and four were exclusively dedicated to the Middle Ages until the fall of Constantinople to the Latins in 1204, while the final volume covered the 600-year period since then until the War of Independence, including the Palaiologan dynasty and the Ottoman conquest. Paparrigopoulos’ aim, as displayed on the title page, was to produce a history “for the many.” The title page also included an epigram from the French historian, prime minister and translator of Gibbon, François Guizot: “The people that studies and knows its history almost always judges its present affairs securely and correctly, as well as the terms of its progress and its future fate.” Paparrigopoulos clearly had what we might call an agenda to pursue in this lengthy work: he aspired to establish the framework of a Greek national history and to make it easily accessible to the Greek people, for the purposes not only of historical interest or intellectual pleasure, but as a way of securing Greece’s political aims.

Written in a clear, crisp and pleasant manner, this is a narrative of events and personalities, with little place for historical philosophizing. Byzantium is often referred to as “our medieval kingdom.”⁶⁸ In his effort to create a popular work Paparrigopoulos provided no footnotes and few references to the sources used, and for this he was exposed to the criticism of Byzantine historians of a younger generation, such as Konstantinos Sathas, Spyridon Lambros and his successor at the university of Athens Pavlos Karolidis, who was also to update the *History of the Hellenic Nation* in the 1920s.⁶⁹ Although the *History of the Hellenic Nation* is today regarded as the work which established the continuous tripartite schema of ancient, medieval and modern as the narrative for Greek national history, the fact that its publication took place over a period of fourteen years makes it hard to pin down its influence on changing historical perceptions. It certainly had a huge symbolic effect and was supported by the Greek state: the government recommended that municipalities and prefectures around the country acquire copies of the *History* and that richer municipalities should award it to their best pupils; the university solidly supported the *History* with large purchases; Paparrigopoulos received a pay rise twice in the 1860s; and parliament voted to fund its translation into French and to send its author to Paris.⁷⁰

Paschalis Kitromilides characterizes the *History* as “the most important intellectual achievement of nineteenth-century Greece.”⁷¹ Another view is that of Elli Skopetea, for whom “[A]ll roads, from one perspective, lead to Paparrigopoulos, and it would not be an exaggeration to assume that if he had not appeared, someone else would have undertaken his position as the theoretician of Greek national unity.”⁷² These views are not mutually exclusive, although Skopetea’s assessment is perceptive: there may well have been something “inevitable” about Paparrigopoulos’ legitimating national historical narrative. Such histories had already been popularized in western Europe in the work of Guizot – upon whose work, as we have seen, Paparrigopoulos consciously drew as a model – Macaulay and others.⁷³ Paparrigopoulos’ individual achievement was that he responded to the needs of his day, perceiving them before they were even fully understood by the broader society, and providing the political arguments for Greek irredentism with a historical and intellectual legitimacy. He was also combative and polemical, fiercely fighting his ground against the detractors of Byzantium within Greece as well as without. His experience producing schoolbooks helped him to hone his style, enabling him to produce a type of history that was clearly explained, pleasant to read and easy for a broad audience to understand.

A key to the development of Paparrigopoulos’ thought lies in his review of Zambelios’ *Folk Songs of Greece* published in the periodical *Pandora*. He opens by outlining the historical dogma, as he calls it, according to which the ancient Hellenes had been wiped out by Slavic invaders and that today’s Greeks were therefore not the genuine descendants of the ancient inhabitants. Paparrigopoulos is, of course, here alluding to Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, who had propounded this “dogma” in his *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* of 1830. Fallmerayer argued that the Greek populations of the Peloponnese had been wiped out by Slavs from the sixth century and the “Greeks” of today were really only the descendants of those invaders.⁷⁴ Paparrigopoulos argued that those who dispute the uninterrupted existence and unity of the Hellenic nation from antiquity until the modern day denied a main reason for its current independence. Indeed, if the view were to prevail “that the genuine Hellenic nation disappeared from the face of the earth and that those who are called Hellenes are nothing other than Slavs, Albanians, Bulgarians and Vlachs, stuttering the Hellenic tongue in semi-barbarian fashion,” then the Hellenic nation would come lower in the order of the peoples of the East than the Serbs and Montenegrins. The Greeks will thus not be able to claim greater rights than the other races that live among or alongside them, and the East will be divided into numerous small states, of which the Hellenic will only be one. As such, “the true and national history of Hellenism in the Middle Ages is not indifferent to its fate in this century.”⁷⁵

Paparrigopoulos signals here that his primary interest in the Middle Ages is to demonstrate that there was a vibrant and thriving Hellenism throughout this period, so that the modern Greek state would have more legitimate claims to territory than the neighbouring Balkan nations. In 1852 when Paparrigopoulos wrote this review, the Eastern Question on the fate of the crumbling Ottoman empire was still rumbling on in the background and the Crimean War threatening to break out. This was a time when Greeks could hope to make some territorial gains. There were, however, competing claims to Ottoman territory. In response to Fallmerayer, Paparrigopoulos

argued as early as a speech of 1850 that the issue is “not to prove that the modern Hellenic nation descends in a direct line from Perikles and Philopoimen.” On the contrary, this is not possible. Rather, just as the Albanians in Greece today are being Hellenized, which in itself strengthens the Hellenic nation, the Slavic tribes who settled in Greece in the past had also been Hellenized by the Byzantines.⁷⁶

Paparrigopoulos had already challenged Fallmerayer in one of his earliest works, a little book published in 1843, *On the Settlement of Slav Races in the Peloponnese*. In this, he challenged Fallmerayer’s claim that destructive Slav invasions had wiped out the Hellenic population. On the contrary, the Slavs living in the north of Greece had been invited by the Byzantine emperors to settle in the Peloponnese as parts of it had been laid barren by plague. The twenty-nine-year-old Paparrigopoulos noted that he planned to write a much longer work on the relations between these Slavs and the indigenous population and Byzantine government.⁷⁷ Such a work never materialized, but this unfulfilled promise provides an indication of the trajectory of Paparrigopoulos’ historical thinking. Moreover, although his 1844 work on the “last year of Greek freedom” displayed very traditional notions of the periodization of Greek history, in this work on the Slav settlements Paparrigopoulos takes a more neutral stance towards the Byzantines, making little distinction between the “indigenous” Greek population and the Byzantine emperors. We also have the seed of the belief that the Byzantine emperors protected and furthered the interests of the Hellenes in the Middle Ages.

While the purpose of this work was the demolition of Fallmerayer’s claims, of that other supposed denigrator of Byzantium, Edward Gibbon, Paparrigopoulos had this to say: “Not knowing English, I am forced to resort to [French] translations of this book, stunning because of the great learning of its author.”⁷⁸ Over thirty years later, however, in an 1878 speech, Paparrigopoulos pointed to Gibbon as the originator of the negative attitudes towards Byzantium expressed “from the past century by our wisest who . . . charmed by the cleverness of Gibbon’s narrations, despise and mock our medieval monarchy . . . forgetting that to this monarchy they owe their language . . . and their name of Hellene; as that kingdom saved us from the Slavs, Bulgars, Arabs, Franks.”⁷⁹ For Paparrigopoulos, Gibbon has now become not only the enemy, but is presented as the reason why Greek intellectuals prior to the War of Independence held Byzantium in contempt.

But Gibbon cannot be blamed entirely, as we have now seen. The aggressively anti-Byzantine prejudices expressed by a broad range of commentators in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not, I suggest, the result of an assumed uncritical reading of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Adamantios Korais, who then allegedly proceeded to diffuse such prejudice through his authority and influence. Rather, such notions were remnants of the past, responses to the collapse of Byzantium with the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the ensuing existence of the Greeks within the Ottoman empire. For those attempting to rehabilitate Byzantium within the new Greek nation-state, it was easier to blame Gibbon than to attempt to explain why Greeks held such attitudes. The discourses around the place of Byzantium in Greek historiography in the nineteenth century divulge tension and confusion, but also the development of new forms of historical thought in response to the debates, and the needs and politics of the new Greece. That there were conflicting answers to various questions – Who were the Byzantines?

How did the medieval period relate to Hellenism? Must one distinguish between popular culture and imperial tyranny? Is continuity between the ancient world and Byzantium comprehensible? Is it a reflection of nineteenth-century Greece, not of Byzantium and its history?

Paparrigopoulos' unified tripartite schema of national history was overwhelmingly successful on one level: it is how Greeks understand their past today. In another sense, however, it contributed to catastrophe not success: Constantinople was never regained, the Byzantine empire was never reborn and the Byzantine lands were emptied of their last remaining Greeks. With the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922, during an attempt to implement a national vision – a vision that owed so much to Paparrigopoulos – a dream of restoring a lost empire was itself lost forever.

NOTES

- 1 See Petrakos 1989: 36.
- 2 Neroulos 1841: 312.
- 3 On Paparrigopoulos, and others, on the structure of national time see Liakos 1994 and Liakos 2002.
- 4 Byron 1970: 884, in his 1812 notes to *Childe Harold*.
- 5 On the so-called “Neohellenic Enlightenment,” a term invented by Konstantinos Dimaras in the mid-twentieth century, see Dimaras 1993, and Kitromilides 1978 and 1994. For an overview of historical writing in this period, see Tabaki 2007.
- 6 The most comprehensive bibliography of Korais' works remains Mamoukas 1888, 1999: 22–48. See also Chaconas 1942: 172–3, 176–8. On Greek readers, schools and intellectuals prior to the foundation of the Greek state, see Roudometof 1998: 21–3.
- 7 Korais 1810, 1988: 43–4.
- 8 Korais 1810, 1988: 51.
- 9 See now Ptochoprodromos 1991.
- 10 Korais 1814, 1988: 205–9.
- 11 Korais 1828: θ–ια.
- 12 Korais 1828: ιη.
- 13 Korais, 1828: μστ.
- 14 For just one example among many, see Argyropoulos 2001: 24–9, where Gibbon's supposed insidious influence is discussed over several pages along with that other culprit Montesquieu, although no actual direct connection is made between their output and the anti-Byzantinism of Greek intellectuals.
- 15 Gibbon 1788, 2005: 434.
- 16 Fassoulakis 1993: 173.
- 17 Translation at Clogg 1969: 104. On church condemnation and occasional excommunication of revolutionary figures such as Rigas Velestelis in 1798 and the outbreak of the War of Independence, see Kitromilides 1989: 179–80.
- 18 Menounos 1979: 269–70.
- 19 Cited at Clogg 1976: 42. On Pringos and the sins of the *Romaioi*, which apparently led to their loss of Byzantium, see also Politis 1998: 6.
- 20 Katartzis 1974: 52. Katartzis wrote in the 1780s but never published his work.
- 21 Katartzis 1974: 46.
- 22 On the history of editing and publishing Byzantine texts and the various corpuses see Reinsch in this volume.
- 23 Stanos 1767: foreword. This order in which things “followed each other” was the standard Byzantine biblical one, starting with the *ktisis*, the *genesis* or building, of the world, followed by accounts of the successive Roman emperors, running straight on into the Byzantine emperors.
- 24 See Politis 1998: 9.
- 25 The monarchy followed a four-year Governorship by Ioannis Kapodistrias.
- 26 Wünsche 2000: 280.
- 27 Wünsche 2007: 186.

- 28 Bastéa 2000: 85–8. For an interesting discussion of von Klenze’s trip to Athens, see Hamilakis 2007: 58–64.
- 29 Bastéa 2000: 163. Bastéa believes that Otto’s desire to incorporate Byzantine architectural elements into religious and other buildings indicates his adherence to the Greek irredentism of the “Great Idea,” with its emphasis on Byzantium. On the contrary, more remarkable was the incorporation of neo-classical elements into Orthodox church buildings when there was an existing and prevailing order of Byzantine church architecture, underscoring the extent to which the (neo-)classical was pushing the Byzantine tradition out of even its established and sacred spaces.
- 30 Dragoumis 1879, 1973: 22. These plans were abandoned so as not to expose Otto to criticism from the Russians for having an Orthodox religious crowning when not an Orthodox Christian.
- 31 Papadopoulou-Symeonidou 1996: 45. These opinion statements, in French, are held in the Geheimes Hausarchiv in Munich, now attached to the Bavarian State Archive. The English translations here are based on Parysati Papadopoulou-Symeonidou’s Greek translations from the French. There is a longer section of Kolettis’ opinion statement translated into English (from Papadopoulou-Symeonidou’s Greek) at Hamilakis 2007: 106–7. It is not impossible that the original language of these documents was Greek.
- 32 Papadopoulou-Symeonidou 1996: 50–1. Kolettis was, of course, the popularizer of the phrase “Megali Idea,” the Great Idea by which the Greek state would expand territorially to cover all the lands in which Greeks lived – three-quarters of which at this stage lay outside the Greek state, mostly within the Ottoman empire – and which in the later part of the nineteenth century came to be specifically identified with the territory of the Byzantine empire. See Kitromilides 1998: 26–8.
- 33 Papadopoulou-Symeonidou 1996: 51–2.
- 34 So claimed Georgios Psyllas, a fighter in the War of Independence, in his memoirs, quoted in Dimitrakopoulos 1996: 149. In his opinion statement, Kolettis cites the clean air, available land, natural fortifications and shipping and commercial opportunities afforded by coastal Megara. See Papadopoulou-Symeonidou 1996: 50–6.
- 35 On the establishment of a network of schools and the university and their role in homogenizing Greek culture within the Greek state see Kitromilides 1989: 163–4 and 166–7. Kitromilides also discusses other means by which a Greek nation-state identity was disseminated, such as the army and the new autocephalous church of Greece, as well as the impact of the new Greek state on the Greek communities outside its borders.
- 36 Schinas 1837: 1–2.
- 37 Karamanolakis 2006: 53.
- 38 Dimaras 1986: 210; Karamanolakis 2006: 94.
- 39 Paparrigopoulos 1844: 4.
- 40 Paparrigopoulos 1858: 145–7.
- 41 Dimaras 1986: 123–4.
- 42 Quoted in Dimaras 1986: 124–5.
- 43 In Paparrigopoulos 1852a, Note.
- 44 Paparrigopoulos 1852a: α. He does not use the *Byzantis* as a source as the book is intended for schoolchildren, and the *Byzantis* is too voluminous and “not classical.”
- 45 Paparrigopoulos 1852a: 1.
- 46 Manousis 1853: 164.
- 47 Herzfeld 1982: 40. On Zambelios see Huxley 1998; Koubourlis 2005.
- 48 In his lexicon of new words posthumously published in 1900, where he gives the date of his neologism as 1851 and himself as its inventor; see Koumanoudes 1900, 1980: 432. However, as Dimaras has pointed out, Zambelios had not yet published his first major work (*Folk Songs of Greece*) at this date, and so this “historical school” had not yet appeared in 1851. Dimaras 1986: xxvii.
- 49 As Ioannis Zambelios reminisced in the notes to his biography apparently written around 1844. See Zambelios 1902: 228–9.
- 50 Zambelios 1852: 21.
- 51 Zambelios 1902: 233–4.
- 52 Zambelios 1852: 5. Pertinently, the folk songs he collected were songs about the War of Independence and the uprising against the Ottomans.
- 53 Zambelios 1852: 25. His criticism of Montesquieu, Le Beau, Voltaire and others is for a similar reason: with the Byzantine chronicles as their sources, they saw only the “king of the Romans”

and his “Roman entourage” as the protagonists of the “Hellenic middle age” and not the Hellenic people.

- 54 Paparrigopoulos 1852b; Koubourlis 2005: 284–92, with translations of long select passages into French.
- 55 Zambelios 1857: 95.
- 56 Soldatos 2003: 46–7.
- 57 Vyzantios 1851: α.
- 58 Vyzantios 1851: β.
- 59 This review, published in the periodical *Mnemosyne*, is reproduced in full at Dimitrakopoulos 1996: 117–24.
- 60 The various instalments are detailed in Dimitrakopoulos 1996: 116.
- 61 From his personal notes, August 1850, in Matthaïou 1999: 216.
- 62 Koumanoudes 1853: 22.
- 63 It would not be too wild a speculation to presume he is referring to Paparrigopoulos, Zambelios and Vyzantios.
- 64 Koumanoudes 1853: 22–3.
- 65 Koumanoudes 1853: 24.
- 66 Koumanoudes 1853: 24–5.
- 67 For example, Kitromilides 1998: 27.
- 68 See Kitromilides 1998: 29.
- 69 Dimaras 1986: 274–6, 294–7, 355–7, 365–7; Karamanolakis 2006: 251–5. One of the main criticisms of the *History of the Hellenic Nation* was that it lacked scholarly apparatus such as footnotes and references. Paparrigopoulos attempted to respond to this with a new scholarly edition equipped with footnotes and bibliographies, but gave up after only a part of the first volume was published in 1881. A second edition of the whole work with some substantial changes was published in 1885–7. See Dimaras 1986: 365–9. On criticism of popular Byzantine history, and its lack of critical apparatus, see Stephenson in this volume ch. 32.
- 70 Dimaras 1986: 228–30. Most of these measures were taken in 1861–2 when only the first volume on antiquity had been published, and thus cannot be completely interpreted as the state supporting the *History*’s claims to Byzantium.
- 71 Kitromilides 1998: 28.
- 72 Skopetea 1988: 15.
- 73 On the type of history being written in western Europe in the early to mid-nineteenth century, see Stuchtey 1999; Crossley 1999; Bahners 1999.
- 74 On Fallmerayer and his reception in Greece, including his bewilderment that Greek children would run after him on the streets of Athens in 1847 shouting “Slav, Slav!” see Veloudis 1982: 26–47.
- 75 Paparrigopoulos 1852b: 398.
- 76 Paparrigopoulos 1850: 201. For similar responses to Fallmerayer, see Matalas 2003: 147–9.
- 77 Paparrigopoulos 1843: 112.
- 78 Paparrigopoulos 1843: 8 n. 8.
- 79 Paparrigopoulos 1878b: 831.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

PIONEERS OF POPULAR BYZANTINE HISTORY

Freeman, Gregorovius, Schlumberger



Paul Stephenson

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the eighteenth century a wide readership in western Europe was familiar with Byzantium. Montesquieu and Voltaire had created a vision of political corruption and imbecility, religious authoritarianism and obscurantism, the antithesis of France in the “Age of Reason.”¹ Grand narratives had sought to demonstrate at inordinate length the absurdity of the decaying empire, for example the twenty-two volumes by Charles Le Beau published between 1756 and 1779, later expanded by Ameilhon, with the twenty-ninth volume appearing in 1817.² And of course there was Edward Gibbon, whose work had appeared in English in six volumes (1776–88), and in a full French translation in 1813.³ Similar sentiments were to be found in Greece, where for a century up to 1821 the classical past prevailed over the Byzantine period for those seeking a model past for an emerging state.⁴ The Byzantine centuries were considered dark by the leading, if not all, Greek intellectuals of the Enlightenment. The most famous detractor was Adamantios Korais, for whom “Byzantium stood for obscurantism, monkishness, oppression, inertia.”⁵ No bridge between Ancient and Modern was sought. However, by the middle years of the nineteenth century a different mood prevailed both in Greece and in western Europe, where popular histories appeared extolling the medieval Christian empire of East Rome.

Three authors were paramount in reintroducing Byzantium, as medieval Greece, in a positive light to a popular audience: E. A. Freeman in English, Ferdinand Gregorovius in German and Gustave Schlumberger in French.⁶ None of our three was entirely an academic, and only one held a university post for some of his active career. Rather, each was a writer and traveller, antiquarian and collector, journalist and public intellectual, demagogue and historian. Each was passionately a philhellene, and each confronted an increasingly professional academy. All were concerned at times, although not all equally, with national and nationalist politics, and also international politics, including the “Eastern Question,” namely how to deal with and benefit from the disintegration of the Ottoman empire.

E. A. FREEMAN

Edward Augustus Freeman (1823–92) is best known for his monumental *History of the Norman Conquest of England*.⁷ However, his mature passion was “universal history” and his gaze was frequently turned on classical Greece, on Italy and the legacy of Rome; on the Germanic “Holy Roman Empire” and Byzantium, the Empire of the New Rome; and latterly on the presumptive heir of New Rome, Modern Greece, and its Slavic neighbours.⁸ Freeman, whose papers are preserved in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, was a pioneer of Byzantine history, and was among the leading British commentators on the “Eastern Question.”⁹

Throughout his life Freeman wrote for an educated public, meaning those educated like himself in the nation’s ancient universities. His pieces appeared most frequently in the *Saturday Review* from 1856 to 1876, and from 1865 in both the *Fortnightly Review* and the *British Quarterly Review*.¹⁰ He wrote outside the academic milieu, having lost his Oxford fellowship upon marrying in 1847, and from 1856 he began to travel abroad, returning to write up his experiences at Somerleaze, his home near Wells in Somerset from 1860. Freeman’s attention was drawn early to the Byzantine empire, largely as a response to the work of George Finlay, with whom he developed a correspondence and then a lasting friendship.¹¹ In a lengthy review of Finlay’s four published volumes of 1844, 1851 and 1854, Freeman condemns those who write with ignorance and prejudice about what they call the “Lower Empire,” and considers this “the more inexcusable . . . since the publication of this great work.”¹² Freeman relied heavily on Finlay for first-hand information on affairs in Greece and south-eastern Europe. For example, in a letter to Finlay dated September 1864 he observed: “I should much like to know something of what has really happened in ‘Moldovlachia’. I don’t believe a soul in England understands a word about anything of the kind, except Lord Strangford, who is first in England.”¹³

Freeman’s three abiding interests under the rubric of “universal history” were: medieval history, primarily that of England; contemporary racial theories; and current affairs, notably the “Eastern Question,” but also Irish “Home Rule.” Although the study of Byzantium would appear to fit most easily into the first of these categories, Freeman considered it essential to all three. The first category, the political history of the medieval Byzantine empire, is most easily dispensed with. Freeman proceeded to develop his ideas, already sketched in 1855 in the review of Finlay’s volumes, with a paper on the “Roman Empire in the East” in 1873, and a second paper published in 1876.¹⁴ These two pieces were pasted together and thoroughly revised for the composite essay entitled “The Byzantine Empire,” published in his 1879 collection of *Historical Essays*.¹⁵ A thorough understanding of the political and institutional history of the Byzantine empire was, Freeman held, essential to the understanding of European historical development. Freeman was ever in search of historical coherence and continuity through political institutions, and Byzantium was the political and institutional heir of Rome. In his *Outlines of History*, “The Roman Empire in the East,” gives way to chapters on the medieval and modern histories of the Great Powers: France, Russia, Germany and Italy. England, of course, he treated elsewhere at extraordinary length. Freeman’s lectures to the Royal

Institution early in 1873 were devoted to *Comparative Politics*, or more particularly to demonstrating that “Greeks, Italians and Teutons,” among the last of which he numbered the English, “have a large common stock of institutions.”

Modern Greece was also an heir of the ancients, of course, although of a different order to the Teutons. In his Rede Lecture, *The Unity of History*, Freeman acknowledged the peculiarly Hellenic character of Christianity. However, he generally discounted religion as a means to understand historical societies, and saw this as the cardinal flaw in recent works by Foustel de Coulanges. Instead, he wished to highlight a difference between societies which were free to develop by assimilation, such as England and France, and those held in states of suspension, which might therefore be distinguished by adherence to particular religions and languages. In the language of the day he wrote not of societies, but of “races.” While it would be odd, he observed, to find various “races” living together in modern Britain or France, Thracians, Greeks and Illyrians have survived as Romanians, Greeks and Albanians, the latter two retaining their pre-Roman languages. Add to this the various Slavs, who had equally resisted assimilation by the Turks, “the Servian” being the purest, as the Bulgarians assimilated their “Finnish overlords,” and the Russians took the name of their Scandinavian lords, and one had a mosaic unseen in the West. The Ottoman Turks he held responsible for this unnatural condition of the peoples of south-eastern Europe.¹⁶

Freeman was throughout his life a pious Christian, and this certainly informed his distaste for Muslims, to whom he referred mockingly as infidels. His sensibilities were offended by Ottoman political calculation, which permitted acts of great cruelty in suppressing popular unrest, and by which he identified an absence of morality within Islam.¹⁷ But it is clear that Freeman’s motivating creed was not religious intolerance, but rather, as A. Momigliano showed quite devastatingly, racism. Freeman embraced contemporary racial theories, espousing a theory of universal history which placed at the fore the Aryan race.¹⁸ He loathed the Turks as inferior to the Aryan race which had led European society in its “three most illustrious branches of the common stock – the Greek, Roman and Teuton . . . who went before our own race in holding first place among the nations on the earth.”¹⁹ Of course, such sentiments were ubiquitous in nineteenth-century Britain, and sat not at all uncomfortably with Freeman’s liberalism.

Freeman’s preferred solution to the “Eastern Question” was the formation of a Balkan federation. He addressed numerous public meetings, including a gathering in St James’s Hall, London, on 9 December 1876, to demand British support for Russian campaigns. The final speaker to take the rostrum that evening was Gladstone. In writing shortly afterwards, on 24 December, to Edith Thompson, his regular correspondent and sometime research assistant, Freeman noted “I have sent you my Manchester speech; of the full report of the Conference they have sent me only one; so you may spend a shilling in buying what Gladstone and I really said. How the Jews, Turks and Tories do lie!”²⁰ Besides his public speeches, Freeman wrote copiously both privately and publicly on these matters. According to Stephens, “[Freeman’s] letters . . . show how deeply he was absorbed by the troubles of south-eastern Europe, and how hard he worked in the cause which he believed to be that of humanity and justice . . . He wrote sometimes as many as seventeen or eighteen letters a day in addition to his other work.” Stephens also lists fourteen pertinent

articles that Freeman published between December 1875 and May 1882, the greatest number in the *Contemporary Review*.²¹ His fullest, but far from final, disquisition was his book *The Ottoman Power in Europe* (1877), which at over 300 pages was a rather rapid expansion of his sixty-one-page pamphlet for the “Popular Library for the People,” entitled *The Turks in Europe* (1877). This is inscribed with his new title, Knight Commander of the Greek Order of the Saviour and of the Servian Order of Takova. The former honour had been bestowed with, apparently, no prior announcement or ceremony, in the early months of 1875. On 19 July 1875 he wrote to Prime Minister Charilaos Trikoupis, in Athens, to express his surprise, pleasure and gratitude, “that the highest honour I have ever received from any quarter should come from Greece.” At this time he had still never visited Greece, but warned Trikoupis that he would now do his very best to remedy that, which he did in 1877.²² According to Bryce, while travelling in Greece in 1877, although “French was the only [foreign] language he could speak with ease . . . [Freeman] made some vigorous speeches to the people in their own tongue.”²³ Subsequently, in 1878, he shared at length his “First impressions of Athens” with the readers of the *International Review*.²⁴

Freeman’s political and ideological support for those throwing off the “Ottoman yoke” was, therefore, only latterly informed by personal experience. His ability to travel was curtailed when Gladstone, who in April 1880 had become Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, appointed him in 1884 to the Regius Chair in Modern History at Oxford. Freeman would later complain heartily of his return to Oxford, where dining at Oriel College and the need to lecture to ever diminishing crowds of students undermined his productivity. In this first year he delivered his six lectures on “The Chief Periods of European History,” drawing heavily on his earlier outlines and surveys, as well as recent public lectures.²⁵ His thought at the time was taken up with close studies of Gregory of Tours, Paul the Deacon and “the history of the teutonic nations in Gaul.”²⁶ Freeman never came, therefore, to offer a full outline history of Greece, ancient to modern, or indeed a single volume devoted to the Byzantine empire.²⁷ Perhaps he was satisfied, as he had been at the outset of his Byzantine studies, that Finlay had said it all as well as he might, but that seems unlikely. It is more likely that he saw his contributions outstripped by those of a new generation of scholars, foremost among whom was J. B. Bury, fellow and tutor of Trinity College, Dublin.

Bury’s first study of Byzantium appeared in 1889.²⁸ Its preface ended with the observation: “Speaking of Mr Freeman, I am impelled to add that his brilliant and stimulating essays first taught me in all its bearings the truth that the Roman Empire is the key to European history.” However, Bury’s work was of a quite different nature to Freeman’s, and beside his long narratives in political history, he was a philologist and editor of Greek texts.²⁹ Notably, Bury was a devoted practitioner of the new German methods: “Erudition has now been supplemented by scientific methods, and we owe the change to Germany. Among those who brought it about, the names of Niebuhr and Ranke are pre-eminent.”³⁰ He is clear that “history is not a branch of literature,” and for that reason, “the reputation of [Theodor] Mommsen as man of letters depends on his Roman History; but his greatness as a historian is to be sought . . . in the *Corpus* and the *Staatsrecht* and the *Chronicles*.” We shall turn to these shortly.

Bury, the scientist, remained studiously neutral on modern Balkan politics. He wrote not of the medieval Greek empire, nor often of the Byzantine, preferring the eastern Roman empire. He was critical of the “production of some crude uncritical histories, written with national prejudice and political purpose.”³¹ Bury was without doubt the foremost Byzantinist of his generation writing in English, and certainly was not the intellectual heir of Freeman, despite coming to Byzantium through Freeman’s writings, and despite praising Freeman in his inaugural lecture as Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge as the “great Oxford historian . . . [to whom] we owe it that the Unity of History is now a commonplace in Britain.”³² Bury, who died in 1927, earned the respect of the increasingly professional academicians on the continent. The first paper delivered at the third congress in Athens, in 1930, was a eulogy in Greek, by one Eug. Darkó, “Discours in Memoriam J. B. Bury.”³³

FERDINAND GREGOROVIVS

Ferdinand Gregorovius (1821–91) wrote more extensively on medieval Greece than Freeman, his exact contemporary, and while his contribution was more enduring, it was surely less significant. Like Freeman, Gregorovius came to Athens via Rome, and he did so only in the last decade of his life. And just as Freeman drew inspiration from Finlay, so Gregorovius based his studies on the work of Hopf. However, whereas Hopf’s contributions “were buried in Ersch and Gruber’s Encyclopaedia,” Gregorovius, like Freeman, sought a general audience for this scholarship, resisting the firm shift in Prussian scholarship towards professional academic production, in Theodor Mommsen’s formulation *Grosswissenschaft*.³⁴

Born on 19 January 1821 at Neidenburg (now Nidzica, Poland) in East Prussia, Gregorovius was from the age of seventeen a student of theology and philosophy at the University of Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia). At the time of his graduation in 1841, realizing that theology was not his vocation, he took work as a private tutor in Neidenburg. This financed his earliest literary ventures, including his first work of fiction, the romance *Werdomar and Wladislaw* (1845), and of history, a biography of *The Emperor Hadrian* (completed in 1848, but published only in 1851, along with his drama *The Death of Tiberius*). Resident once again in Königsberg, he witnessed the revolution of 1848, and “entered with enthusiasm into the agitation of popular meetings and clubs.”³⁵ He demonstrated his sympathy with the Polish cause by the publication of his *Die Idee des Polentums* (1848), and argued throughout his life for the liberty and independence of Poland, Italy and Greece.

In 1852 Gregorovius journeyed to Italy, and he returned almost annually thereafter, keeping detailed journals between 1856 and 1877, posthumously published in two German editions and an English translation.³⁶ In addition, he completed an eight-volume *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages*.³⁷ A plaque erected in 1991 at the Albergo Cesari, near the Temple of Hadrian, celebrates Gregorovius’ first lodging in the city in October 1852.³⁸ By then he had spent the better part of two months on Corsica, and a few days on Elba; naturally he wrote about it at length. His despatches to the (*Augsburger*) *Allgemeine Zeitung*,³⁹ which would form the basis of his book *Corsica* (1854), were read with interest by Friedrich Althaus, who tracked Gregorovius down to Rome in the spring of 1853. And with them on that first trip

together was one Jacob Burckhardt. In the following year, 1854, Gregorovius determined to write the history of the city of Rome in the Middle Ages, and to that task he devoted himself for the next two decades. He conceived of this project as the fulfilment of Gibbon's original intention, but with the additional goal of highlighting the connection between the Germans and Rome, as he stressed in the first pages of the first published volume.⁴⁰

Gregorovius complained that he received no academic recognition for this grand project in Germany. His work ran against the stream that is best illustrated in the illustrious career of Theodor Mommsen. Gregorovius' history of medieval Rome was widely contrasted with the three-volume history of republican Rome written by the youthful Mommsen. Erudite, replete with provocative new hypotheses and Niebuhrian source criticism, but above all politically engaged, Mommsen's history was the achievement of a singular individual. Gregorovius remarked on it and its author, writing in his Roman journal for March 1862: "Theodor Mommsen is here. His appearance is a curious mixture of youthfulness and pedagogic conscientiousness. This in great part explains his work, which is distinguished by critical, destructive acumen, but which is rather a pamphlet than a history."⁴¹ And yet in the decades after the publication of his "pamphlet," Mommsen presided over the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, a project of immense scope that might only be produced by a team of dedicated philologists and epigraphers, and later also edited those volumes of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* devoted to the age of the *Völkerwanderung*. Mommsen supervised by example, editing much of the material himself, even as he continued to produce independent works of great erudition and little popular appeal, notably his multi-volume study of Roman law (*Staatsrecht*).⁴² In 1890 Mommsen would, in response to the great historian of the early Church, Adolf Harnack, bemoan the fact that never again would a single scholar master the sum of classical knowledge. Germany had, he reflected, entered the age of *Grosswissenschaft*, which like *Grossindustrie* required capital input. Young academicians now aspired to lead research teams, spending that capital on major undertakings, following the course of his own career.⁴³ State money was directed to support the enterprises of the academy, and even Bismarck could not derail Kaiser Wilhelm's pet projects, notably the excavations at Olympia, on which the Kaiser opined: "Every one of us remembers having heard about the Olympic Games in his youth . . . should we not complete so great an undertaking [as the excavations] hardly half finished, because of money?! That would be unworthy of Prussia."⁴⁴

It was *Grosswissenschaft* that Gregorovius resisted, although he had no private fortune on which to draw, so lived on the income from his writings.⁴⁵ From 1860 to 1862 he received from the Prussian government an annual subvention towards the *History* of 400 Thalers, and this appears to have been renewed on a few occasions.⁴⁶ In 1862–3 King Maximilian II of Bavaria sought to derive some benefit by inviting Gregorovius to spend some months each year in Munich. The invitation was declined, but the stipend and invitation together suggest the historian was held in some esteem in the German lands, if not by the German academy.⁴⁷ This was surely due to the broad popular appeal of his writings. In the words of a sympathetic reviewer, Sigmund Münz: "[Gregorovius'] work is less to be regarded as a consecutive whole than as a succession of historical paintings instinct with descriptive power, and a series of portraits of popes, heroes and women. They are drawn with vigour

and enthusiasm by a writer who is at home in the historical relations between popes and emperors, but whose sympathies are specially enlisted in the scenic effects of history, and who cares little for the more ordinary aspects of life, its principles of administration and of domestic economy.”⁴⁸ For that reason, Gregorovius’ volumes appealed broadly and, as they appeared, each was sufficiently popular to allow him to continue to write full-time. His contributions to the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, frequent earlier in his career, were now curtailed until February 1867, when he despatched an essay on “The Empire, Rome and Germany,” inspired by Bryce’s *The Holy Roman Empire*.⁴⁹

On 28 March 1870, Gregorovius, a Protestant, was for the first time denied access to materials in the Vatican Library. Complaining of Catholic “fanaticism,” he removed himself to Munich in July, and it was from there that Gregorovius followed the events of the Franco-Prussian War, in which his brother Colonel Julius Gregorovius was engaged, notably in the siege of Metz (in which action he won the Iron Cross).⁵⁰ Gregorovius did not know, of course, and had little reason to care that Gustave Schlumberger, a Frenchman and native of Alsace, had as a response to the siege of Metz enrolled in the “eleventh international ambulance of the Red Cross,” which left on 4 September for the front at Sedan.⁵¹ Aged almost fifty, Gregorovius’ own response was to issue a series of articles, published in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* and elsewhere: “Europe and the Declaration of War,” “Nemesis,” “Italy and the German Nation,” “France’s Guilt and Punishment,” “Alsace and Lorraine Once More,” “Pavia and Sedan,” “Paris and Rome.”⁵² His reaction to the French capitulation at Sedan and the bombardment and siege of Strasbourg, which damaged the cathedral and also the city’s collections of manuscripts and antiquities, was to send a poem to the *Allgemeine Zeitung*.⁵³

Gregorovius was contemptuous of Napoleon III, whose adventures in Italy ostensibly to defend the papal state he had witnessed in 1859.⁵⁴ The defeat of Napoleon III at Sedan and the consequent collapse of the Second Empire exposed the papal state, without a protector, to the encroachment of the Italian army, and in October 1870 Rome and Latium were annexed to the Kingdom of Italy. Following two decades of good relations with Italian society, especially with those who administered both Church and municipal archives, Gregorovius confronted the problems associated with Italian unification and the designation of Rome as the new capital. It was a cause for which he had long been a passionate advocate, but its passage made him Rome’s secular historian, a favourite of the municipality which offered to fund an Italian version of his magnum opus. In March 1876 a still greater honour was bestowed upon him: honorary citizenship. But meanwhile Gregorovius’ standing with the Catholic Church had deteriorated. In 1874 his *History of the City of Rome* was placed on the Index, the list of works banned by the papacy. He recorded the incident grimly in his journals, considering it a barb aimed at Bismarck rather than himself, and expressing relief that the ban had not come after the publication of the first volume. Now, with the work complete, the pope had provided an excellent advertisement.⁵⁵ With the principal libraries of Rome now barred to him, Gregorovius returned to Germany to settle in Munich, being the city nearest Italy. In 1865, he had become a member of the Bavarian Academy. It was from there that in the last decade of his life he turned his attention to Greece.

“Athens and Rome,” he wrote, “are inseparably connected, they are joined to each other like spirit and will, like thoughts and action.”⁵⁶ Following an extended trip to Greece in 1880, he penned a series of shorter studies, published in 1881 in the journal *Unsere Zeit* and the *Sitzungsberichte der Münchner Akademie*.⁵⁷ In the following year he produced *Athenais, Geschichte einer byzantinischen Kaiserin*,⁵⁸ a companion volume of sorts to his earlier history of the life of Lucrezia Borgia. The empress Athenais, wife of Theodosius II, had lived in Athens, Constantinople and Jerusalem, allowing Gregorovius to roam widely across the late Roman world. Following his second trip to Athens in 1882, he began work on the companion volume to this Roman history, a *History of the City of Athens in the Middle Ages*. This was not, however, composed *in situ* from close study in local archives, for the author spent more time in the libraries of Venice, Naples and Palermo than in Athens itself, and he now wrote mostly at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. The journals he kept for these last years have not survived, perhaps culled in the autumn of 1889, when Gregorovius destroyed many of his papers, but revised his Roman diaries with a view to their publication.⁵⁹

Gregorovius’ conception of medieval Athens was clearly influenced by contemporary attempts to place that city at the heart of a medieval Hellenic empire. A Romantic philhellene, he began his work with a terse dismissal of Fallmerayer’s thesis, within an astute overview of contemporary scholarship.⁶⁰ While he followed Fallmerayer in asserting, quite incorrectly, that Athens had been vacated by its population, which retired to Salamis for a period, he dismissed his claim that “the national gods of the Greeks were exterminated by Alaric,” refuting the notion that the Goths had destroyed the temple at Eleusis and reassigning blame to Theodosius.⁶¹ Gregorovius ended his *History of Athens* with the poetic and starkly Romantic observation that Constantinople still threatens to darken the “newly risen star of Athens . . . [For] if after the expulsion of the Ottomans from the Bosphorus the Greek cross flies once again over Hagia Sophia, and a new Hellenic *Kulturreich* is established with Byzantium at its heart, then the *Lebensgeister* of Greece will be drawn to it with magnetic attraction.”⁶² But this was, of course, a good thing. The boundaries of the Kingdom of Greece were drawn too narrowly, he felt, reflecting the views of Greek national historians after Paparrigopoulos.

Just months before his death on 1 May 1891, Gregorovius delivered his only address before the Bavarian Academy. His subject was “The Great Monarchies, or the Empires of the World in History,” which he addressed within the rubric of “universal history.” Embracing views espoused by Freeman, he extolled the virtues and liberties of the Saxon peoples, the Germans and English. Althaus would recall the paper as “a pamphlet, insignificant in compass, but in contents and style a great achievement, in which as historian and philosopher he erected a noble monument to himself.” Strikingly, Althaus chose to end his eulogy on Gregorovius with a quotation from Freeman, observing that:

As he remained free from the pedantry and exclusiveness of his craft, as in himself he united the character of the scholar and the man of the world, so his historical studies offered no obstruction to the keenest sympathy with the great movements of time. In this sense history was to him, as Freeman puts it, “the politics of the past, politics the history of the present.”⁶³

It may be that Althaus, who had lived in London since 1854, had in mind Freeman's (anonymous) long, largely narrative and broadly positive review of *The History of Athens in the Middle Ages*, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* of July 1891.⁶⁴ The work was also reviewed favourably by Karl Krumbacher. In 1892, the year after Gregorovius' death, Krumbacher was appointed to the newly established chair in Byzantinistik at Munich. He promptly set up the Institute for Byzantine Studies,⁶⁵ and founded the journal *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, the first and still the premier journal of professional Byzantine studies. By his efforts, Byzantinistik in Germany took the path cleared by Mommsen, against which Gregorovius had railed.

Gregorovius' works remained popular after his death. *Lucrezia Borgia* had, upon its appearance in March 1874, sold out its first German edition in two months, and was swiftly reprinted and translated into French and Italian.⁶⁶ It continued to be reprinted years after his death and can today be purchased still in countless editions in several languages. Translations into English of his work were longer in coming, as most were produced by the indefatigable Mrs G. W. (Annie) Hamilton.⁶⁷ An English translation of *The Emperor Hadrian*, by Mary E. Robinson (1898), offered Ronald Burrows the opportunity to reflect on Gregorovius' oeuvre: "Gregorovius had not the strength or grip to write a great book. He never faced fair and square the comparative value of his sources, and his judgments lack weight; yet he is throughout honest and unprejudiced, and has the one cardinal merit of giving all his references."⁶⁸ R. W. Seton-Watson disagreed, in his 1903 translation of Gregorovius' *Tombs of the Popes*. By his estimation Gregorovius was "a romanticist and idealist among historians, he offers a striking contrast to the historian of ancient Rome, so terrible in his unsparing realism . . . His temperament was as much that of the poet and artist as the historian . . . [he was] the natural enemy of those stern pedants who frown upon an attractive style, and who, thanks to their foolish renunciation, have bequeathed so many musty volumes to the top shelves of posterity."⁶⁹

GUSTAVE SCHLUMBERGER

Whereas both Freeman and Gregorovius died even as Bury and Krumbacher were reshaping Byzantine studies in Britain and Germany, Gustave Schlumberger lived through the period of transition in France. His publications, like theirs, were both academic and popular, but where Freeman is best remembered for his works on Norman history and Gregorovius for his study of medieval Rome, Schlumberger's enduring reputation rests on his grand narratives devoted to the middle Byzantine empire. His interpretations had broad appeal, and were not sufficiently rigorous in the eyes of many. Still he retained the respect and friendship of many serious academicians in Paris, some of whom enjoyed his patronage. He was universally recognized for his excellence as an interpreter and publisher of coins and seals.

Schlumberger was born in 1844 at Guebwiller, Alsace, into a rich industrial family. He studied medicine in Paris, from 1863, and in 1870 served as a doctor in the Franco-Prussian War.⁷⁰ He earned a doctorate in medicine, in 1872 publishing his dissertation as *Documents pour servir à l'étude de l'érysipèle du pharynx et des voies respiratoires*.⁷¹ Thereafter, he turned to his great passion: numismatics. Described by Charles Diehl as a "collectionneur heureux et passionné," Schlumberger's first major work in the field was a study of German bracteates of the twelfth and thirteenth

centuries.⁷² He also collected and published coins and seals of the Crusader principalities, and the first fruits of his work were incorporated in 1877 into his *Les principautés franques*. In 1878, he published the two volumes of *La numismatique de l'orient latin*, with a supplement and alphabetical index following in 1882.

A member of the Société française de numismatique et d'archéologie (founded in 1865), in 1883 Schlumberger breathed life into its moribund publication, *Revue numismatique*, third series, along with Anatole de Barthélemy and Ernest Babelon, fellow members of the "Institut." On 12 December 1884, Schlumberger was elected a member of the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, of which he served as president in 1896, noting how absorbing was the task of organizing and chairing so many prize committees.⁷³ He continued throughout his life to publish articles on coins, and also on seals which he collected as fervently. In 1916 an edition of the 690 French seals and signet rings owned by Schlumberger and his close friend Adrien Blanchet was published.⁷⁴ By then Schlumberger had abandoned his professed intention to produce a composite *Sigillographie de l'orient latin*. Instead, he had entrusted this task to Ferdinand Chalandon (d. 1921), and it was finally edited, annotated and published by Blanchet in 1943. Schlumberger was unable to devote further time to the project because, as Blanchet observed, he was by then absorbed with "la chère Byzance, trop couverte de sang et d'horreurs, mais si profondément imprégnée de gloire et de faste."⁷⁵

Schlumberger became "intoxicated" by Byzantium during his first trip to Greece and Turkey in 1875.⁷⁶ He was perhaps introduced to the empire's sigillographic remains by (the younger) A. D. Mordtmann (1837–1912) in 1875, and on that and a subsequent trip to Istanbul in 1879 he collected the vast majority of his Byzantine seals, purchased from merchants in the bazaars. It was in Mordtmann's company that his passion for Byzantine seals was nurtured during a period of six months in 1879 that he spent in Istanbul.⁷⁷ Mordtmann, who had published the first Byzantine seals in 1872, and Schlumberger were together creators of the field of Byzantine sigillography, but it was the catalogue based on Schlumberger's private collection *Sigillographie de l'empire byzantin* (1884) that is its first monument. The tome ran to more than 750 pages, containing 1,100 figures, and drew from the dozen articles he had devoted to Byzantine seals between 1877 and 1883 (together only one-quarter of the almost fifty publications he produced in those seven years). He continued to publish additional seals as he purchased them or came across them in private collections, from 1889, as irregular bulletins entitled simply "Sceaux byzantins inédits," of which there were six (1889, 1891, 1894, 1900, 1905, 1916). In 1911, he published a boulloterion, the pincer-like instrument that was used to strike the lead seal around strings attached to both ends of a document, which were threaded through the seal's central channel.⁷⁸

Following the eloquent lead of Rambaud, whose study of the age of Constantine Porphyrogennetos won universal praise, Schlumberger devoted himself to the tenth century. Unlike Rambaud, who had mastered Greek, Latin and Russian, Schlumberger had studied medicine, not philology. By Grégoire's estimation, this rendered him inadequate properly to translate Latin and Greek, beyond the inscriptions on seals and coins, and to decipher monograms.⁷⁹ Certainly, Schlumberger was not an editor of texts, and he relied for his information on Slavic literature on esteemed correspondents, including Uspenskii and Vasilevskii, and for Arabic on Sauvair and

Schefer (to whom *Un empereur* was dedicated as “evidence of deep affection”). But it is hard to contemplate his producing such lengthy narratives based principally on sources that existed only in the Paris and Bonn corpora or PG – that is, as Greek editions with Latin translations – unless he was a competent translator from Greek and Latin. Rather, Grégoire’s complaint is symptomatic of the broader criticism, that Schlumberger resisted the move in Byzantine studies, as in classical studies, to source criticism and the publication of texts. Schlumberger felt that history was best delivered in energetic prose and with lavish illustrations, mainly with line drawings and etchings. He supplied lists of these “gravures,” although rarely with adequate attributions.⁸⁰

Schlumberger’s first monograph of Byzantine history, devoted to the emperor Nikephoros Phokas, appeared in 1890. It ran to 781 pages, and was followed by three equally large volumes published in 1895, 1900 and 1906 as a trilogy under the title *L’épopée byzantine*, “The Byzantine Epic.” However, we learn from Schlumberger’s *mémoires* that this title was imposed upon him by his publisher, Hachette, much to his regret, for it gave his readership the impression that his previous work on the emperor Nikephoros Phokas was not part of the series.⁸¹ His tetralogy embraces the reigns of Nikephoros Phokas, John Tzimiskes and Basil II, ending with the last of the Macedonian dynasty, the sisters Zoe and Theodora.

An early reviewer observed of Schlumberger’s first historical volume that it was “with the exception of Rambaud’s *Constantin Porphyrogénète*, the most substantial monograph devoted to a Greek emperor published to date,” written not in a dry fashion, as are so many such works, but with a passion that impassions the reader. The reviewer, S. Reinach, professed himself “almost astonished” that one might have found so many attractive details in a mere ten years of history.⁸² The book was, in fact, one-third longer than Rambaud’s study of the tenth century,⁸³ thanks to the 240 line drawings, four colour lithographs and three maps. It was not, however, in Reinach’s estimation, a work to satisfy scholars, as it lacked adequate critical apparatus, and perhaps evidence of scholarly competence. There were no footnotes or specific references to editions of texts, but rather a list of texts was appended to the work. Schlumberger’s handling of sources showed no evidence of *Quellenkritik*, for example where he frequently preferred Leo the Deacon to other sources, providing no explanation nor comparanda. Damningly, Reinach observed, if one cites “Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Paris, 1857–66,” then why not also “Bibliothèque nationale, *passim*”?⁸⁴ Most egregiously, where Schlumberger found gaps in his source base, he might intervene “in the manner of Walter Scott or Dumas.” Reinach condemns this attempt to embellish history as unacceptable, striving not to show “wie es eigentlich gewesen,” but rather using plausible inference to suggest what might have happened. Even as Reinach concludes that “despite its faults, which are not venial, [the book is] agreeable to read,” he recommends that those who might wish to follow Schlumberger’s example do not write the biography of an emperor, but rather turn to the study of sources and institutions.

In short, the antiquarian collector and writer, who wished to share his passion for the lost cultures of the eastern Mediterranean with the broadest audience, had run into the rigour of late nineteenth-century philology and scientific history. Salomon Reinach (1858–1932) was a formidable classical philologist, author of the *Manuel de philologie classique* (1880, 1883) and *Grammaire latine* (1886).⁸⁵ Hence, one

might understand this fierce criticism of Schlumberger's perceived shortcomings. However, there was certainly some personal animosity involved, although on that count Schlumberger is far from forthcoming. He reveals in his memoir that he first met Reinach in 1885, when the latter had returned from a long sojourn at the French School at Athens. Schlumberger was "seduced by [Reinach's] natural charm and immense erudition," and it was at Reinach's advice that he published the very book Reinach reviewed. Reinach's character later "changed greatly, he became sour. It seemed to me also that wanting to speak about everything, on any matter, he sometimes made serious errors."⁸⁶ Here Schlumberger appears to allude to the Dreyfus Affair, which heralded a recrudescence of anti-Semitism in France, although casual anti-Semitism was far from unusual in Schlumberger's social milieu before 1894.⁸⁷ Reinach was a leading figure and intellectual of the Franco-Jewish establishment, founder in 1880 of the Société des études juives, and vice president of the most important Jewish organization of the time, the Alliance israélite universelle. Schlumberger and Reinach would take opposite sides in the Dreyfus Affair, the latter being a founding member with his brothers of the Comité de défense contre l'antisémitisme.

Reinach was, in 1890, employed at the National Museum of Antiquities at Saint-Germain-en-Laye.⁸⁸ Schlumberger considered Alexandre Bertrand (d. 1902), the founder and director from 1867 of that institution, to be "un savant sans charme, d'un caractère peu agréable."⁸⁹ Perhaps this, then, was the first stage in their estrangement, before 1894. In any event, Schlumberger was not deterred by Reinach's stinging criticism. Instead, when compiling his *Souvenirs*, published posthumously, he considered *Un empereur* to be his most important book, and the following years to be the apogee of his career.⁹⁰ In contrast to Reinach's judgement, Schlumberger's contribution to Byzantine studies in the later nineteenth century is generously summarized by Charles Diehl. In 1899, Diehl became the first holder of the new chair in Byzantine history established at the Sorbonne. Casting his eye over the previous century of Byzantine studies in France, he highlighted the shift that took place in 1870 with the publication of Rambaud's *Constantin Porphyrogénète*, and regretted that Rambaud had turned his attention elsewhere, so that "none devoted himself with perseverance to the serious and thorough study of Byzantium," until the Latin Orient once again gave France a Byzantinist.⁹¹ Diehl treats Schlumberger's introduction of Byzantine sigillography as his most profound achievement, but does not disparage the scholarship in his four "beaux livres" of grand narrative (1890, 1896, 1900, 1905). "Perhaps one might find that four large volumes each of nearly 800 pages is enough for a century (959–1057)," but it is to the merit of these "savants livres" that although only an erudite could compose them, they are accessible to laymen.⁹² At that time, Schlumberger was sponsoring a grand project being undertaken by Diehl and G. Millet: a series of illustrated monographs entitled *Les monuments de l'art byzantin*.

Following his Byzantine tetralogy, commenced in 1884 and completed in 1905, Schlumberger allowed his attention briefly to stray to other fields. He never lost interest in the Crusader states, dashing off a 300-page monograph on Amaury, king of Jerusalem, in 1906. But he also turned to nineteenth-century history, with two volumes in 1908 under the title *Soldats de Napoléon* (one an edition of letters, the other a journal), and in 1910 an edition of *Mémoires du Commandant Persat, 1806 à 1844*. From 1910 Schlumberger also devoted more time to his role as public

intellectual, becoming a regular contributor to newspapers, publishing around sixty articles over thirteen years. He contributed forty-three articles to the *Journal des débats*, between November 1910 and August 1923, and from January 1911 to July 1920 another sixteen articles to *Le Gaulois*.⁹³ Many of these were collected into his two edited volumes *Récits de Byzance et des Croisades*, in 1916 and 1922. Although not on the scale of Freeman, his contributions were timely and occasionally political. Schlumberger followed Balkan politics closely, and was vehemently pro-Greek, as his letters exchanged with the children's writer Penelope Delta reveal.⁹⁴

One of Schlumberger's pieces for *Le Gaulois*, published as "L'empereur Basile et le roi Constantine à Athènes" in column one on page one, on 4 October 1913, draws a direct comparison between Basil II's "terrible war of forty-three years against these same Bulgars today so recently vanquished by the Greeks." He began the piece thus:

When, several weeks ago, the victorious king of Greece Constantine, arriving from Salonika, disembarked at Phaleros with great pomp and amidst indescribable popular enthusiasm, the correspondents of French newspapers noticed, among the frenetic acclamations and greetings, the strange epithet "*Voulgarokotonos*," that is to say "Slayer of the Bulgars." "Long live the liberator king! The victor king! The Bulgar-slayer!" cried the thousands of spectators at every opportunity, as the king passed among them visibly moved. They had rushed from Athens and all the cities of the Peloponnese and Attika to be present at this second modern resurrection of the Hellenic nation.⁹⁵

Schlumberger proceeded to explain the strange epithet, and why it should be employed by the Greeks of their new king, Constantine, victorious at the end of the Second Balkan War. He did not observe that this was no spontaneous outburst of Byzantine feeling, but an orchestrated acclamation, thus in true Byzantine style, of the king who claimed to be the successor to the last Roman emperor, Constantine XI. After the assassination of his father, posters were distributed of the new king wearing the uniform he had sported as crown prince and commander-in-chief of the Greek army, above the caption: "The greatest of the Constantines, the Bulgar-slayer, [Constantine] XII."⁹⁶

Many of Schlumberger's contributions to newspapers were not, however, so much political as topical. For example, he begins and ends an article dated 1 April 1918 with references to the use of flaming liquids and gases in the "terrible war of today," in order to offer an exposition on "Greek fire."⁹⁷ The same newspaper reported communiqués relating to the "New [1918] Battle of the Somme" (Operation Michael). Similarly, he began his essay of 17 January 1920 with the observation that while all details relating to military organization are interesting at a time of world war, the particulars with which he will now deal have a "saisissante actualité," alluding to the Greek invasion of Asia Minor, but passed no further judgement.⁹⁸

His last contribution to *Le Gaulois du dimanche* of 31 July 1920, which appeared in the literary supplement, is an account of Nikephoros Phokas' triumphal entry into Constantinople in 961.⁹⁹ This article and its predecessors were contributions to, and advanced publicity for, his planned second edition of *L'épopée byzantine*. A second edition of the first volume, *Un empereur byzantin au dixième siècle*, did appear in

1923,¹⁰⁰ but progress on the larger project was slowed and then halted by progressive blindness.¹⁰¹

On the occasion of his eightieth birthday on 17 October 1924, Schlumberger was honoured with a two-volume festschrift, listing 173 published works by the honoree and containing fifty-seven papers by scholars from France (many, including Bréhier, Diehl, Ebersolt, Rénault and Millet), Belgium (Cumont, Delehaye and Grégoire), the USA (Porter), Italy (Orsi and Jerphanion), Romania (Iorga), Russia (Kondakov) and England (Bury and W. Buckler).¹⁰² The subject matter was as broad as Schlumberger's tastes, embracing history and archaeology, numismatics and sigillography of Byzantium and the Latin East, but also of France (plus a section on philology, to suit the interests of some contributors more than the recipient). In the same year, 1924, the first international congress of Byzantine studies was held in Bucharest: Byzantinistik had emerged as a serious international academic enterprise.¹⁰³

Now almost entirely blind, the aged Schlumberger did not attend the Bucharest congress, nor the second congress in Belgrade held in 1927, where in the opening address the president of the organizing committee, J. Radonić, praised the giants of French Byzantinology, Rambaud, Diehl and Millet, alongside Bury and Krumbacher, Vasilevskii and Uspenskii.¹⁰⁴ There was no praise for Schlumberger, nor for Freeman nor Gregorovius. By the time of the third congress, in Athens just three years later, Schlumberger had died. Upon Schlumberger's death in 1929, his papers and his extensive library were bequeathed to the Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France. These are available only to members of the five académies or qualified readers on their recommendation.¹⁰⁵ It is perhaps ironic, not only for the fact that it increased the list of prize committees for the president to chair, that the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres established the prix Gustave Schlumberger for Byzantine history, not numismatics or sigillography. This prize is still awarded, but to those who might better be considered the heirs of Diehl, Krumbacher and Bury than of Freeman, Gregorovius and Schlumberger.

CONCLUSION

Freeman, Gregorovius and Schlumberger were all politically engaged, although to different degrees, and keen observers of the political upheavals of the nineteenth century, driven by "the spirit of resurgent nationality."¹⁰⁶ They were all also, to different degrees, victims of a contemporaneous phenomenon, namely the transformation of history into a scientific positivism. Bury, in 1903, observed that the transformation was not yet complete, but it was no longer possible for one to ignore source criticism, nor to fill gaps in the historical record creatively. The transformation that began with philologists rendered the classical world hostile territory to those who wished to paint on a broad canvas or to render the past poetically. It was equally problematic for those concerned with universal history or in relating the past to modern politics. Byzantium, therefore was a refuge. It was sufficiently obscure to allow each historian to pursue his own agenda.

Although only Schlumberger can be said to have devoted himself to Byzantine history such that he is remembered principally as a historian of the empire, Gregorovius considered it a suitable extension of his passion for medieval Rome,

and Freeman as a missing link without which one could not comprehend the modern world nor approach universal history. None was willing or able to engage with the Byzantine World in the terms set out by a new cadre of scholars armed with critical methods, the practitioners of, in Mommsen's apt phrase, *Grosswissenschaft*. Hence, the pioneers of popular Byzantine studies were also resisters. For them Byzantium was, in the words of Lionel Gossman, a refuge for "the private scholar, whose work is deeply and personally motivated, a vocation rather than a profession." They rejected, in their own ways but consistently, modern critical approaches to texts and to the accumulation of facts, viewing "bookishness and pedantic erudition as barriers to the living reality of the past."¹⁰⁷ Their tradition lived on for much of the twentieth century in the work of Steven Runciman, who was, ironically, the first and only student of Bury.

NOTES

- 1 Diehl 1905: 22; Angelov 2003, offers a fascinating introduction to "Byzantinism."
- 2 An abridged version for schoolchildren by Caillot appeared in 1819, before the final volumes of the continuation. Le Beau, his work and its reception have received far less attention than one would hope. However, see Zaimova 2002.
- 3 There is now copious literature devoted to Gibbon and his views of Byzantium. One might usefully start with McKittrick and Quinault 1997. More generally on "decadence" see Vance 2005.
- 4 Politis 1998.
- 5 Mango 1965: 37. One must not regard Korais as representative. See Christodoulou in this volume.
- 6 Space dictates that these sketches are overly brief, and I intend to say more elsewhere. For now, on Freeman at greater length, see Stephenson 2007.
- 7 On Freeman's life see at greatest length and eulogistically Stephens 1895. The most expansive obituary of Freeman is a "warts and all" piece by James [Viscount] Bryce 1892.
- 8 It is striking that Freeman features not at all in an excellent recent collection devoted to British contributors to Byzantine studies, Cormack and Jeffreys 2000. The best modern analysis of the full range of Freeman's historical writings is contained in Burrow 1981. Also useful are the published papers of a seminar convened in Pisa by Momigliano 1981. Lacking in empathy is the brief account Kenyon 1993: 159–64.
- 9 See McNiven 1990: 32–3, 62, for writings on the "Eastern Question" and related matters.
- 10 Several revised articles from the *Saturday Review* are collected in Freeman 1879, 1892. *The Fortnightly Review* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1865–1931; Horace Marshall 1931–54) was first published in May 1865.
- 11 See Hussey 1995: I, xv. Only one letter from Freeman to Finlay has been preserved among Finlay's papers at the British School at Athens. There are also copies or drafts of four letters from Finlay to Freeman, and several references to Freeman and his works elsewhere. All are edited in an appendix to Stephenson 2007.
- 12 Freeman 1855: 344, being a review of: Finlay 1844, 1851, 1854.
- 13 Finlay Papers, B6 (120), p. 6; Hussey 1995: II, 820. Percival Smythe, the eighth Viscount Strangford (d. 1869) was a noted linguist and sometime attaché to Constantinople.
- 14 Freeman 1873.
- 15 Freeman 1879, 1892: 235–82.
- 16 For Freeman's thoughts, see Freeman 1879, 1892: 176–234, revising ideas presented in the *Contemporary Review* (February 1877) and *Fortnightly Review* (January 1877).
- 17 Stephens 1895: II, 121: "Freeman brought every question to the touchstone of morals."
- 18 Momigliano 1986: 240: "I chose Freeman as the case to oppose to Max Weber because he is a good example of the situation in which universal historians found themselves when they accepted power struggles as the most important feature of history and, furthermore, treated them as being brought about by the coexistence of incompatible racial groups."

- 19 Freeman quoted by Momigliano 1986: 238. See also Bryce 1892: 502: "By far the strongest political interest – indeed it rose to a passion – in his later years was his hatred of the Turk." See also Burrow 1981, and Momigliano 1981: 318–21, on Freeman's search for the unity not of man, but of the Aryan race of man.
- 20 Stephens 1895: II, 144. The papers of Edith Thompson (d. 1929), including 186 letters and three postcards from Freeman, were deposited in Hull University archives in 1934. They are catalogued as DX/9, and have been examined by Capern 1997.
- 21 Stephens 1895: II, 124–5, lists the articles.
- 22 Stephens 1895: II, 92.
- 23 Bryce 1892: 498.
- 24 Freeman 1879, 1892: 278–302.
- 25 Freeman 1886a. On the repetition of certain ideas, here referring to a recent lecture delivered in Edinburgh, Freeman explained (pp. v–vi) "I can only say that a thought which is worth suggesting once is worth suggesting twice."
- 26 See the opening paragraph of Freeman 1886b. These were subsequently published as Freeman 1888.
- 27 There are among Freeman's papers at the John Ryland's two unfinished, unpublished manuscripts entitled *History of Greece* (3/2/2) and *Little Greek History* (3/2/3), neither of which stretches beyond the Peloponnesian War. See McNiven 1990: 45.
- 28 Bury 1889. In 1893, Bury saw to the posthumous publication as essays of some parts of the draft of Freeman's second volume on the *History of Federal Government*. See also Oman 1892, in the popular series *The Story of Nations*. Oman was then a fellow of All Souls, Oxford. On the next generation of British scholars of Byzantium see Cameron 2000.
- 29 Cameron 2000: 165–6. See also Bryer 1988, and for the USA, Barker 2002.
- 30 Bury 1930: 5 (pp. 3–22 being a reprint of his 1903 inaugural). See also Goldstein 1977.
- 31 Bury 1930: 7.
- 32 Bury 1930: 12.
- 33 Orlandos 1932: 57–61.
- 34 Marchand 1996; Gooch 1959: 122–50, 455–6.
- 35 Gregorovius 1907: xiv.
- 36 Gregorovius 1892, 1893; Gregorovius 1907.
- 37 The fullest biography is Hönig 1921, 1944, which reproduces a good number of Gregorovius' letters verbatim. This is a rather uncritical and uneven narrative, which reaches the start of the *History of Rome* only on p. 287 of 423. For further perspectives, see the preface to the German edition of his journals, by Friedrich Althaus 1893: iii–xvi; translated by Hamilton 1911; Esch and Petersen (eds) 1993. The article by Chambers 2000 is especially interesting and useful.
- 38 Gregorovius 1907: 2, which today marks the Hotel Albergo Cesari. This is not the same as a plaque, raised in Rome in 1992, at 13 via Gregoriana, which marks Gregorovius' residence in the city after 1860. On this address and second plaque see Gregorovius 1907: 105–6; Chambers 2000: 415.
- 39 The *Allgemeine Zeitung* (1798–1929) was established as a liberal newspaper by Cotta, the famous Stuttgart publishing house which produced Gregorovius' longer works. At first published in Tübingen (1798–1803) and then Stuttgart (1803–7), it was published in Augsburg from 1807 to 1882, and then in Munich (1882–1929). See Petersen 1993; Breil 1996.
- 40 Gregorovius 1859–72: I, 4. Gregorovius 1907: 16; Chambers 2000: 413–14, and Noble 1996, in his review of Esch and Petersen (eds) 1993.
- 41 Gregorovius 1907: 154.
- 42 Gooch 1959: 459–69. See also Gossman 1983: 21–41, recounting the attitude of the Swiss philologist J. J. Bachofen to Mommsen and the Prussian School, with which sentiments Gregorovius heartily concurred. Bachofen objected, in 1862, to Mommsen as the archetype of "the modern way of thinking" on classical antiquity, and far more cuttingly of his "reduction of Rome to the clichés of the most insipid Prussian salon liberalism."
- 43 Mommsen 1905: 208–10; Marchand 1996: 75–6.
- 44 Marchand 1996: 77–91.
- 45 Hönig 1921, 1944: 408–11. On the second and last occasion Gregorovius mentions Mommsen in his Roman journals, he records on 30 March 1873: "Mommsen came to Rome and still remains here. Only met him accidentally at dinner. Like Richard Wagner he is evidently a sufferer from megalomania. The occupants of professors' chairs refuse to recognise me, because I work

- independently, accept no official post, and even *horribile dictu*, possess a modicum of poetic talent.” Gregorovius 1907: 439.
- 46 According to Seton-Watson in 1903 trans. of Gregorovius 1857: 34.
- 47 For example, Gregorovius 1907: 439; Chambers 2000: 419.
- 48 Münz 1892: 699. Sigmund Münz was a correspondent of the writer who would later edit Gregorovius’ letters to the Countess Caetani-Lovatelli: Münz 1896.
- 49 Gregorovius 1907: 271–2. The first edition of Bryce’s book, often revised and republished, was in 1864. That Gregorovius took so long to read it is a reflection of his lack of comfort in English, on which see Seton-Watson in 1903 trans. of Gregorovius 1857: xvii–xli.
- 50 Gregorovius 1907: 376–8, opined on the events of August and September 1870 that “[t]he diplomats are active. They come with their conjuror’s tricks to rob the German people of the fruits of their victory.” In the same month, August 1870, he met Lord Acton, who shortly afterwards wrote a rather dismissive review of “the Borgias and their latest historian.” Acton omitted Gregorovius entirely from his survey of “German schools of history” in the first volume of *The English Historical Review*. See Chambers 2000: 428–9.
- 51 Schlumberger 1934: I, 86.
- 52 Seton-Watson in 1903 trans. of Gregorovius 1857: xxx; Petersen 1993.
- 53 Gregorovius 1907: 377–9.
- 54 Gregorovius 1907: 54–64, esp. 62: “I regard the independence of Italy as a sacred national right . . . Only I cannot stand the thought that a man like Napoleon should make capital out of the fact of having liberated a nation. Germany will renew her youth, Prussia is her Piedmont . . . a religious war of principles lies before us.”
- 55 Gregorovius 1907: 449–50; Chambers 2000: 425. Four more of his works were placed on the Index by 1882.
- 56 Gregorovius 1892: 112. He also planned a further companion study, of the city of Jerusalem, which never came to pass.
- 57 Gregorovius 1927: 595–640 (“Athen in den dunkeln Jahrhunderten. Eine Studie”), 641–66 (“Mirabilien der Stadt Athen”), 667–92 (“Aus der Landschaft Athens”).
- 58 Gregorovius 1927: 709–850.
- 59 According to Althaus in his edition of the journals. See Gregorovius 1907: vii. Althaus and Gregorovius did not meet for twenty-five years, between the Italian trip of 1853 and a trip they took to the Bavarian Alps in 1878. Another eight years passed after that until they met again, but Althaus was to become Gregorovius’ literary executor.
- 60 Gregorovius 1889: I, xviii; Gregorovius 1927: 8–9. On Fallmerayer, see the Introduction to this Part, and Christodoulou.
- 61 Gregorovius 1927: 693–705: “Did Attila kill the national gods of Greece?”
- 62 Gregorovius 1889: II, 437; Gregorovius 1927: 584.
- 63 Gregorovius 1907: xxii–xxiii.
- 64 [Freeman] 1891: 180–210, where on p. 182 one notes the stern reprimand: “We do not wish to underrate the importance for Germany of the war of 1870 . . . [But] we would suggest to them that it is quite possible, without being traitors to their country, to forbear alluding to Metz and Sedan in a book concerning a different epoch of history . . . We . . . assure the countrymen of Gregorovius that we are quite ready to believe that ‘Corinthus was a son of Zeus,’ or that ‘the Germans thrashed the French,’ . . . provided they will only spare us unreasonable iterations.” In this respect, Gregorovius would appear to have indulged in the very act for which he condemned Mommsen in the 1860s, of dressing Romans as Prussians.
- 65 See Pirivatrić in this volume.
- 66 Evidently this was Gregorovius’ most popular short work, although according to Münz 1892: 699, “It is an artist’s account of the times of Pope Alexander VI; the interest centres in the person of the beautiful Lucrezia, the daughter of Alexander and of his mistress Vannoza Catanei; but it is replete with conjectures, and the suppositions occupy almost more space in the volume than the actual facts.”
- 67 Only a few of Gregorovius’ works reached an English-speaking audience during his lifetime, notably his youthful work on Corsica, which was translated three times into English, in England, Scotland and the USA. *Lucrezia Borgia* appeared in an English version thirty years after those in German, French and Italian. All of his works that mention Greece were translated into Greek. See Chambers 2000: 423, 428–33.

- 68 Burrows 1899: 455. This judgement was not shared by R. W. Seton-Watson, who in 1903 published a translation of Gregorovius' *The Tombs of the Popes* (1857) with a "Memoir of Gregorovius." This concludes (1903: xxxix) with the observation that Gregorovius was "well worthy to stand by the side of Ranke and Mommsen," although one suspects that is the last place he would have wished to spend eternity. An English translation of *The Tombs of the Popes*, of which Seton-Watson had no knowledge (1903: ix), had already been produced by Mrs L. W. Terry, published in Rome "for the benefit of the Victoria Home." Seton-Watson attributed Gregorovius' Romanticism to the fact that his father had taken his family to live in a restored castle of the Teutonic Knights.
- 69 Seton-Watson in 1903 trans. of Gregorovius 1857: xxxix.
- 70 Schlumberger 1934: I, 43–73 ("Mes années étudiantes à Paris"), 75–140 ("La guerre").
- 71 "Erysipelas of the pharynx and the respiratory tract," being a study of how a skin infection spreads to the mucous membranes and respiratory tract.
- 72 Schlumberger 1873.
- 73 Schlumberger 1934: I, 176; II, 73.
- 74 Schlumberger 1934: II, 339–40, a record from early in 1922 spells out Schlumberger's great affection for Blanchet, and his designation as executor.
- 75 Schlumberger *et al.* 1943: viii.
- 76 Schlumberger 1934: I, 172–7, where Schlumberger tells the now familiar story of how a fire destroyed the Byzantine imperial archives shortly after the Turkish conquest, and that the remnants were pushed into the Bosphorus, whence lead seals had ever since washed up.
- 77 Schlumberger 1934: I, 211–17. He had first met Mordtmann four years earlier, on his first trip. Schlumberger regarded the six months in Istanbul as among the most pleasant and fruitful of his life, and three publications emerged from it: *Le trésor de San'a (monnaies himyaritiques)* (1880), on some silver pieces he identified in the bazaar as worthy of purchase; *Les îles de princes . . .* (1884), which he had visited; and *La siège, la pris et la sac de Constantinople . . .* (1914), drawing on his walks along the walls with two eminent Russians, Loubanoff and Basily, and "le vieil historien grec de Constantinople, le Dr Paspatis."
- 78 Schlumberger 1911. For an image see Figure 21.3, described by Pentcheva in this volume.
- 79 Grégoire 1927–8: 783–7.
- 80 Sirapie der Nersessian, then a diplômée des études supérieures at the Sorbonne, supplied a full annotated list, arranged by category and medium, to Schlumberger 1924: II, 529–58.
- 81 Schlumberger 1934: I, 264.
- 82 Reinach 1890.
- 83 Rambaud 1870. See also the succinct commentary at Gooch 1959: 456.
- 84 Reinach 1890: 508.
- 85 Rodrigue 2004.
- 86 Schlumberger 1934: I, 177.
- 87 White 1999: 12, has Schlumberger announcing of Charles Haas, he is "the most likeable and glittering socialite, the best of friends, [who] had nothing Jewish about him but his origins and was not afflicted, as far as I know, with any of the faults of his race, which makes him an exception virtually unique." Schlumberger writes cynically, and his anti-Semitism is casual, for it is clear that Haas was one of Schlumberger's many Jewish friends and acquaintances. See, for example, also Schlumberger 1934: II, 162 (an amusing anecdote about attending a circumcision), 167, 170 (dining with a Rothschild "avant l'Affaire," and an amusing misunderstanding involving a bookbinder also called Rothschild); II, 176 (dining chez Sarah Bernhardt).
- 88 Rodrigue 2004: 5, notes that Reinach would, in 1893, become assistant keeper, and in 1902 would replace Bertrand as keeper of the museum and editor of *Revue archéologique*. He contributed Alexandre Bertrand's obituary to that journal.
- 89 Schlumberger 1934: I, 250. His brother, Jean Bertrand (d. 1900), he had disliked still more.
- 90 Schlumberger 1934: I, 177; II, 73–111.
- 91 Diehl 1905: 29.
- 92 Diehl 1905: 30. Diehl was also the voice abroad of French Byzantine studies, tracing its origins and development for a US audience in 1911, although the only record of that lecture appears to be a two-line notice in the *Annual of the American Historical Association for 1911*, in the record of the annual meeting at Buffalo and Ithaca, published in 1913, at pp. 27–8. This is noted by Charanis 1983: 95.
- 93 He had earlier published only three articles in *Journal des débats* on 27 April 1893, 1 October 1895

and 5 November 1895. A full list is supplied at Schlumberger 1924: xxix–xxxi. The *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* was a daily newspaper (1814–1944), a continuation of the publication established in 1789 to provide an exact record of debates of the National Assembly. *Le Gaulois* was a French daily newspaper published first in 1868, and then continuously from 5 July 1868 to 30 March 1929.

- 94 See e.g. his letter to Delta dated 7 April 1913; Lefcoparidis 1962: 53–5.
- 95 Reprinted with “King Constantine” removed from the title in Schlumberger 1916–22: I, 50–8 at 50. The original can now be read online through the Bibliothèque nationale’s *Gallica* site <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>, in this case at <http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5384039/f3.chemindefer>.
- 96 Stephenson 2003: 114.
- 97 Schlumberger 1916–22: II, 37–48, originally published in the *Journal des débats*, which can be accessed via *Gallica* <http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k488574d>.
- 98 Schlumberger 1916–22: II, 23–36, originally published in the *Journal des débats*, which can be accessed via *Gallica* <http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5384039/f3.chemindefer>.
- 99 Schlumberger 1916–22: II, 11–21; the original can be accessed via *Gallica* <http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5384039>.
- 100 Schlumberger 1890, 1923.
- 101 Schlumberger 1934: I, i; II, 397.
- 102 Schlumberger 1924.
- 103 See now Jeffreys *et al.* 2008: 3–20.
- 104 Anastasiević and Granić 1929: xxv.
- 105 Acomb 1961.
- 106 Bury 1930: 7.
- 107 Gossman 1983: 40–1.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

A CASE STUDY IN THE EMERGENCE OF BYZANTINE STUDIES

Serbia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries



Srdan Pirivatrić

When Byzantine studies emerged during the humanistic period, the Serbian lands were mostly under Ottoman control, separated from the intellectual currents in Christian Europe. In the wider South Slavic region, the basic Byzantine studies of the humanistic scholars from Dubrovnik and Dalmatia were most often simply excerpts from Byzantine historiographers based on their western European editions.¹ The works by these authors from the eastern Adriatic coast, with the significant exception of Mauro Orbini in abridged Russian translation (1722), had almost no reception among the Serbs. The Austrian count Đorđe Branković, learned writer of an extensive work with a medieval conception of history (named “Chronicles,” written between 1690 and 1711), made scant use of some Byzantine sources in his work, but nevertheless he became the first Serbian historiographer who, although only in a rudimentary manner, worked with original Byzantine source material. Archimandrite Jovan Rajić, the first ever Serbian author of a modern history (“of various Slavic peoples,” being the Bulgarians, Croats and Serbs, published in 1794–5), having been living on the periphery of the Austrian empire, used certain Byzantine authors too, but only in the Latin translations of the chrestomathies. In both cases one is concerned with the reception of European Byzantine studies rather than any contribution to their development.

From the uprising of the Serbs in the Smederevo sanjak (1804) in the Ottoman empire to the creation of the autonomous (1830) Principality of Serbia and afterwards of an independent Principality (1878) and Kingdom (1882), several factors affected the development of the science of history in Serbia in general, and of Byzantine studies in particular. Besides the general aspirations towards the higher levels of enlightenment, it had been mostly historicism, as the integral part of the foundations of the Serbian nationalism in the nineteenth century, that prevailed. As was natural, there was a great interest in the Serbian past, most particularly the medieval period. The other significant factor was methodological in nature. The criticism in the approach towards the historical sources was evident early on, at the very beginnings of modern historiography, for example in the works by Jovan Rajić or Vuk Karadžić. However, the critical historiography of the nineteenth century in Serbia remained for a long time rudimentary. Gathering and publishing sources were the preoccupation

of learned men who wanted to contribute to the progress of historical knowledge. This was particularly visible in the activities over several decades of the Society of Serbian Senses (Slovesnost) and its heir, the Serbian Learned Society, the predecessor of the Serbian Royal Academy. Outside of these valuable heuristic activities, the road to scientifically and methodologically based research was long and slow. Most particularly, lectures in medieval studies and history in the Lyceum and the Great School in Belgrade, the predecessor of the university, were under the strong influence of national-romantic ideas, epic poetry and tradition in general. The teachers and researchers were all amateurs. Finally, Serbian historiography was thematically mostly focused on national issues. Within this general climate, the Serbian translation of the *Ioannina Chronicle*, by Jeftimije Avramović in 1862, represents an individual attempt by an erudite, although it should be stressed that it was actually the first Byzantine study in Serbia, and that it remains the only translation of this important source to this day.

The key event for the development of Serbian historiography and medieval studies was the outcome of the conflict between the representatives of the romantic and critical schools (the conflict is very well known, although not completely clear in its details).² The critical orientation of historiography represented a general phenomenon in many countries, and thus could be considered a stage in the development of the very science of history. However, besides that general meaning, reconsidered in the framework of the local situation in Serbia during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the issue of survival or supremacy of the critical historiography was in close relation to the issue of the general direction of the culture, with significant consequences on the cultural policy of the state and social institutions. The victory of the critical school, which was strongly felt in the selection of members of the newly established Serbian Royal Academy of Science in 1886, as well as in the personnel changes at the Great School, heralded an age of significant progress of the historical studies in Serbia. The outcome of this conflict, which for years shook not only the scientific and educational circles and the Great School, but society in general, was linked to the archimandrite Ilarion Ruvarac and Ljubomir Kovačević, and also to a foreigner, a Czech, Konstantin Jireček. Stojan Novaković did not get involved in this conflict, although he introduced the critical approach much earlier in his method and his widely directed research. These scientists touched upon Byzantine themes in their works to a greater or lesser degree, but they did so with the aim of researching the Serbian Middle Ages. Finally, none of them, with the exception of Jireček, was professionally equipped for historical studies – based on formal criteria, they themselves were amateurs.

Actually the first Serbian contribution to Byzantine history, namely *Constantine: The Last Emperor of the Greeks or the Conquest of Constantinople by the Turks (AD 1453)*, was undertaken not in Serbia, but in London in 1892 by then ambassador to the Court of St James and later Count, Čedomilj Mijatović, who was both a highly positioned politician and a historian. He was also considered a member of the critical school. The work was quite solid for that stage of Serbian historiography and Byzantine studies. Nevertheless it remained a solitary effort, an expression of the personal interest of the author in pre-Ottoman Balkan studies and also of some indicative political views. Significantly, it was dedicated to Prince Constantine, the heir to the Greek throne. Mijatović was surely among those who considered that the Kingdom

of Greece should move towards the revival of the Byzantine empire and that Prince Constantine should take over what Emperor Constantine XI had lost.

Nonetheless, parallel to the rise of historical studies in general, and also to the important changes in the teaching methodology at the Great School in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it was becoming increasingly clear that a systematic approach to Byzantine studies was needed.³ In 1890 it was decided to found a department at the Great School with a “special view on Byzantine history,” but this decision was not realized. After 1893, Byzantine studies were informally introduced into the curriculum, once Božidar Prokić had become lecturer in the History Department on Ancient History and the Middle Ages, and his interests had gradually turned towards Byzantium.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Serbia enjoyed its first generation of historians who had been educated abroad, and were aware of the importance of Byzantine sources for the study of national history. Thus Stanoje Stanojević envisaged a voluminous edition of all the Byzantine sources relating to the Serbs (although of ten planned volumes, only two were published in Novi Sad, in 1903 and 1906, entitled *The Byzantine Empire and the Serbs*). The government’s decision to provide state scholarships for the advancement of the talented graduate students abroad was of utmost significance to the development of Byzantine and medieval studies. These developments in Serbia turned out to be a happy concurrence with important moments in the development of Byzantine studies in western Europe. At that time, the first Byzantine departments were being established at major European universities, in Munich in 1898 and in Paris in 1899. The state scholarships of the Kingdom of Serbia enabled a group of students to attend the newly established seminars given by the already famous Karl Krumbacher in Munich, which had significant consequences for the development of Byzantine studies in Serbia as well as in other areas of historiography. Most of the generation of Serbian graduate students who, with the government’s support, became specialized Byzantinists or medievalists abroad – Stanoje Stanojević, Vladimir Ćorović, Jovan Radonić, Nikola Radojčić, Dragutin Anastasijević, Božidar Prokić and Filaret Granić – were at some point students of Krumbacher.⁴

Among Krumbacher’s students from Serbia, Dragutin Anastasijević (1877–1950) could be considered the first specialized Byzantine scientist. After graduation from the Great School in Belgrade in the field of classical philology he was a student of Krumbacher with a state scholarship. He received his Ph.D. from Munich in 1905 with the dissertation *Die paränetischen Alphabete in der griechischen Literatur*. Almost simultaneously, a professor at the Great School, Božidar Prokić (1859–1922), received his Ph.D. as Krumbacher’s student in 1906 with the well-known dissertation *Die Zusätze in der Handschrift des Johannes Skylitzes (Cod. Vindob. Hist. Gr. LXXIV)*.

In the meantime some significant changes occurred at the Great School in Belgrade which brought about the establishment of an independent centre for Byzantine studies. Namely, the Great School was turned into the university in 1905, where at the beginning of 1906 the Seminar for Byzantine Studies was established within the Faculty of Philosophy (FPh), thus becoming the third oldest university department for Byzantine studies in Europe.⁵ In May 1906 young Anastasijević was appointed the chair of the Seminar, at the rank of associate professor. In his first teaching years,

1906–10, Anastasijević taught medieval and Modern Greek language and Greek palaeography, and from 1910 to 1914 he taught the history of the Byzantine empire for the period 395–1025. The exercises mostly consisted of reading texts and analysing their language and style. He paid special attention to the creation of the Seminar's library and in spite of a scarcity of resources he managed to create a relatively expansive collection. But it was almost completely destroyed during the First World War. Prokić continued his career at the National Archive. The basic line of his research, before and after the publication of his dissertation, was the investigation of the so-called Samuilo's state, an important research subject for Serbian historiography and a subject on which he published several works, not fully surpassed to this day.

Nikola Radojčić (1882–1964), who studied in Graz, Zagreb, Jena and Munich, was a student of Krumbacher, but also of Heinrich Gelzer, who was his mentor for his important Ph.D. thesis *Zwei letzten Komnenen auf dem konstantinopolischen Thron*, published in 1907. His body of work makes him one of the most significant Serbian historians in general; however, after having published several significant Byzantine studies – on how Byzantine authors of the eleventh and twelfth centuries named the Croats and Serbs, on Anna Komnene's information on the Serbs, on the information supplied by later Byzantine authors on the Serbs – his interests turned away from Byzantine themes towards the history of the institutions, state law, the history of Bosnia and the history of historiography.

For Stanoje Stanojević (1873–1937) and Vladimir Ćorović (1885–1941), students of Konstantin Jireček and Vatroslav Jagić, the short time they spent with Krumbacher was just an additional, secondary professional advancement. Stanojević's interest in the relations between the Byzantine empire and Serbia, from the beginning of the century, almost completely ceased in his later years, with the significant exception of his fruitful Serbian diplomatic studies, which also included the Byzantine component. Ćorović, on the other hand, in his remarkable scientific career – over 1,000 published works make him the most prolific Serbian historian – rarely touched upon Byzantine themes. Nonetheless, the Byzantine component in their professional education was very significant for their very important support for the personnel changes which, in the 1930s, brought about the advancement of Byzantine studies at Belgrade University.

The First World War interrupted lectures at the university, which restarted after the war in significantly different political circumstances, in the newly founded Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (from 1929 onwards Yugoslavia). After the end of the war, Anastasijević, with typical fervour, began working to replenish the Seminar library, which in part was covered by German war reparations funding. However, as was the case in the years before the war, the key problem of the Seminar was the lack of resources and associates. For many years he conducted his research in the archives of the Mt Athos monasteries, primarily Hilandar and the Great Lavra. He took over 600 photographs of various documents nowadays partly lost, and the precious collection is now kept in the Archive of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts (SANU). He was preoccupied with Byzantine–Serbian relations, particularly under the first members of the Nemanjić dynasty and the period before the fall of the Byzantine empire, as well as with Byzantine–Bulgarian and Byzantine–Russian relations in the second half of the tenth century, in connection to Samuilo's state. It is

known that he was working on a synthetic overview of Byzantine history, which was published in over 100 articles in the *National Serbo-Croato-Slovene Encyclopedia* (I–IV, 1924–9). Anastasijević's studies provided him with international renown as a distinguished Byzantine scientist. In 1921, Anastasijević started teaching at the Theological Faculty, but he remained the chair and often the only associate at the Seminar for Byzantine Studies. The organization of the Second International Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in Belgrade in 1927, was his great success. In 1931 Anastasijević finally left the Seminar, without leaving behind him an immediate successor or heir.

Nonetheless, as early as in 1932, another student of Krumbacher – a monk named Filaret (Branko) Granić (1883–1948) – was appointed chair of the Seminar. He was educated in Novi Sad and Vienna, and later in Munich, where, in 1909, near the end of Krumbacher's life, he obtained his Ph.D. with the dissertation *Die Subscriptionen in den datierten griechischen Handschriften des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts*. He entered the Orthodox monastic order in 1912 and later graduated at the Higher Theological School in Sremski Karlovci. After the war he transferred to the Theological Faculty in Belgrade, and from 1932 to 1941 he taught the cultural history of the Byzantine empire as an honorary professor at the Seminar. Granić's work, a significant scientific corpus, did not receive sufficient recognition in his lifetime. He dealt with issues that remained outside the focus of scientific interests, or were rather narrow and recondite. Nevertheless, his interests were diverse, including church history, canon law, the relations between the state and the Church in the fifth and sixth centuries, the first monastic communities, the church policy of Justinian, the founding of the archbishopric of Ohrid, and the autocephalous state of the Serbian Church and its monastic codebooks. He covered these issues in a number of works of permanent value, first because of his scrupulous approach to the subject and sources, but also because of his special knowledge gained through his education and his service in the Church. Particularly valuable were his notes and outlines published in the bibliographic sections of *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*.

The position of chair of the Seminar was given to George Ostrogorsky (1902–76) in 1940, even then a well-established Byzantine scientist, who under peculiar circumstances had ended up in Belgrade a few years earlier. Ostrogorsky was born in St Petersburg, which he fled during the October Revolution in 1917, taking asylum in Finland. He began his university studies in Heidelberg, continued them in Paris, and completed them in 1925 at Heidelberg with his Ph.D. dissertation *Die ländliche Steurgemeinde des byzantinischen Reiches im X. Jahrhundert*. From 1929, he taught as a *Privat Dozent* at the university of Breslau (today Wrocław, Poland). However, with the rise of Nazism, his living and working conditions deteriorated. Ostrogorsky decided to accept an earlier invitation from Stanoje Stanojević and moved from Breslau to Belgrade in 1933. In the first years of his stay in Belgrade he worked within the Seminar for Byzantine Studies as an honorary professor, until he took over the chair from Granić in 1940.

Around the same time when Ostrogorsky started working at the Seminar, Vladimir Mošin (1894–1987) joined the department at the position of a private associate professor. He was part of the last wave of Russian scientists who, as refugees from Russia, relocated to the Kingdom of SCS between the two wars, and made an enormous contribution to their new homeland. Some of them were extremely

important for Byzantine research, and one might mention Teodor Taranovski (1875–1936), Sergije Troicki (1878–1972), Aleksandar Solovjev (1890–1971), although of the group only Ostrogorsky and Mošin could be considered Byzantinists *stricto sensu*. In 1936, together with Solovjev, Mošin published a very significant volume, exemplary for its time, of the Greek charters issued by the Serbian rulers. However, Mošin's engagement at the Seminar was casual, while he was waiting for several years to be appointed associate professor at the FPh in Skopje, which eventually happened in 1940. On the other hand, Ostrogorsky's activities were closely linked to the Seminar from the very beginning, and completely in accordance with the wishes of that circle of historians who assisted in bringing him to Belgrade. It would turn out that his coming was a turning point in the development of Byzantine studies in Serbia.

Yugoslavia's involvement in World War II, in April 1941, did not interrupt Ostrogorsky's scientific work, but rather saw him secluded in his study, away from the public eye, where in silence he prepared significant studies which awaited better times for publication. University life was almost at a standstill during the war, but the Seminar library was this time spared, and thus facilitated his solitary research.

Without a doubt, George Ostrogorsky was one of the greatest names in Byzantine studies of the past century. His scientific work is well known in details, and has been evaluated on many occasions.⁶ The first years of his brilliant scientific career were marked by his remarkable dissertation, and he proceeded to discuss the commercial and social foundations of the development of the Byzantine empire, the social metamorphosis of the Byzantine empire, the relationship between the state and Church, the tax system, co-rulership, prices and wages. The most important phase of Ostrogorsky's work was in Yugoslavia, where he published seminal works on autocracy in the Byzantine empire and the Slavic world, the medieval hierarchy of the states, the agrarian situation in the Byzantine empire, Byzantine iconography, and on relations between the Byzantine empire and the Slavic world. Out of this extensive and modern research came his famous synthesis of Byzantine history, considered for many decades the best of its kind, and in many ways unsurpassed – *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*, Munich 1940 (2nd edn 1952, 3rd edn 1963, Sonderausgabe 1965).

Radical political changes came about by the end of the Second World War, namely the Communist Party of Yugoslavia coming to power in Belgrade and Serbia (1944) and then the rest of Yugoslavia (1945), as a result of a series of international circumstances, war operations of the USSR army and activities of the Yugoslav Partisan-Communist movement. These had a significant and long-lasting effect on both Serbian and Yugoslav historiography, in a degree and manner that thus far has not been the subject of any scientific research. One might offer a general opinion that medieval and Byzantine studies were, compared to other disciplines, relatively unscathed, and the opportunities for scientific work and university lectures in these fields remained relatively good.

The material resources at the university, in the difficult post-war years of "reparation and rebuilding," were scarce, and thus it could not have been expected for the Seminar to be transformed into a significant scientific centre. However, the possibility of establishing scientific centres within the academies of science at the

federal level resulted in the foundation of the Institute for Byzantine Studies of SANU in 1948, under the leadership of Ostrogorsky. In the decades that followed, the Institute proved itself to be the organizational nucleus of large projects, mostly visible in its journal *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* (ZRVI), a series of monograph studies and an edition of *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju naroda Jugoslavije* (VIINJ) which offered translations of and commentaries on excerpts from Byzantine sources that related to the history of the peoples of Yugoslavia. The scientific work was organized in several larger thematic groups, consisting of the history of the Byzantine empire, Byzantine–South Slavic relations, Byzantine literature and philology, and Byzantine and post-Byzantine art.

Ostrogorsky was the initiator of and driving force behind all initiatives in Byzantine studies during the three post-war decades. He continued working on the themes outlined in his pre-war research. Numerous fundamental studies followed, including those on peasant pre-emption rights, the Byzantine land register, Emperor Dušan and his aristocrats in their struggle with the Byzantine empire, the Byzantine emperor and the world hierarchic order, the internal structure of the Byzantine empire, the creation of the thematic system, the history of tax-exemption in the Byzantine empire, Byzantine towns in the early Middle Ages, the Byzantine village municipality, *pronoia* under the Komnenos dynasty, the Byzantine aristocracy, and the evolution of the Byzantine coronation ceremony. A particular mention should be given to the significant monographs on the *pronoia* and the Serres region after the death of Dušan. His synthetic history was published in many languages, including in English for the first time in 1956. Almost all of his works were published in the *Collected Works of George Ostrogorsky*, in five volumes (1969–70). Under his firm hand, the Twelfth International Congress of Byzantine Studies was held in Ohrid in 1961, after which he became the honorary President of the International Association of Byzantine Studies, and was a recipient of significant national and international honours and awards.

Common activities of the Seminar and the Institute under Ostrogorsky's leadership brought about the phenomenon known in international circles as the “Belgrade School of Byzantine Studies.” From the early 1960s through to the end of the 1980s, over twenty graduate students undertook their specializations at the Seminar, under then rather restrictive conditions for attending the graduate courses. Under Ostrogorsky's supervision, several prominent local Byzantine scientists and medievalists graduated, first and foremost Jadran Ferluga, Božidar Ferjančić and Ljubomir Maksimović.

Jadran Ferluga (1920–2004) received his Ph.D. in 1956 for a dissertation on Byzantine administration in Dalmatia. His career as a professor at the FPh lasted until he transferred to Münster in 1971, where he took over the Seminar for Byzantine Studies. His significant career focused on the issues of Byzantine provincial administration, Byzantine rule over Dalmatia and Byzantine–South Slavic relations, as well as some particularities of the Byzantine feudal system. Particularly interesting are his commentaries with the translation of excerpts from Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes, where he elaborated in great detail on many issues relating to the so-called Samuilo's state. His fruitful career in Münster was unfortunately stopped prematurely, in 1993, due to illness.

Ostrogorsky's immediate successor at the Seminar and the Institute was his

student Božidar Ferjančić (1929–98). Born and educated in Belgrade, after undergraduate studies of history at the FPH in Belgrade he received his Ph.D. in 1960 for a thesis on despots in the Byzantine empire and South Slavic states. He took over the running of the Seminar from Ostrogorsky as a tenured professor, and ended his career at the FPH in 1994, while he worked as the director of the Institute from 1976 until his death in 1998. After Ostrogorsky's departure, Ferjančić took over the large responsibility of the further development of Byzantine studies in Serbia. Quietly and unobtrusively, he organized the scientific research and took care in educating new generations of researchers. Concurrently, his scientific career was receiving international acclaim.⁷ He was a Byzantinist of wide horizons, with interests mostly focused on the late Byzantine period, particularly the issues of internal development, society, institutions and economy, which are the themes that became almost a trademark of the Belgrade School of Byzantine studies in the last decades of the twentieth century. Among these are the famous studies on the dignities of *despotes*, *sebastokratores* and *kaisares*, about the internal conflicts between the last Palaiologoi, properties of the Palaiologoi and the institution of co-rulership under the Palaiologos dynasty. Besides, as a mentor for graduate studies, with his selection of topics, he orchestrated the production of several monographs on the Palaiologoi at the school. He also wrote monographs about Thessaly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and Serres under Serbian and Byzantine rule during the fourteenth century. For the *VIINJ*, he translated and wrote commentaries for excerpts from the work by Constantine Porphyrogenitos, the historians of the second half of the tenth century, data from different hagiographies and finally from the Byzantine rhetors of the second half of the twelfth century. His translation and commentary of the excerpts from Nicephorus Gregoras and John Kantakouzenos, in collaboration with Sima Ćirković, are outstanding. Two more almost completed larger works were found after his death among his papers: the translation of and commentary on excerpts from the legal collection of Demetrios Chomatenos, and a monograph about the king and emperor Dušan, also written in collaboration with Ćirković.

Ostrogorsky envisaged the Belgrade School of Byzantine Studies primarily as a school of historians, and thus history was the main focus of the scientific activities at the Institute for Byzantine Studies, but other disciplines had their place within this framework, notably philology and art history, and among the most important scholars were Franja Barišić (1914–88), Ivanka Nikolajević (Stojković) (1921–90), Ninoslava Radošević (1943–2007) and Ivan Đurić (1947–97). The principles laid out at the time by the founder of the Belgrade School, George Ostrogorsky, were sustained through this period under the careful leadership of Božidar Ferjančić. During years when Yugoslavian society and the state were plunged into crisis, at the end of the 1980s, Byzantine studies were for Serbian science “one of the few remaining windows onto the world.” In the hard 1990s this enabled the small organism to survive, if not to flourish. The atmosphere at the Seminar and the Institute enabled members not only to continue with their true vocation, but also, in a milieu of intellectual and spiritual tolerance, provided them with a safe haven.

It is paradoxical that exactly at the time when the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia started, the institutional nature of Byzantine studies began to consolidate on the national level – the Yugoslav Committee for Byzantine Studies organized the First Yugoslav Conference of Byzantine Studies in Zadar in

November 1990. The scientific gathering in the heart of the old Byzantine theme of Dalmatia was also the last of its kind. After the successive secession of the republics, the break up of Yugoslavia followed, and in the light of further political developments, the Yugoslav Committee for Byzantine Studies became Serbian, within the appropriate legal succession. In the meantime, two more conferences were held (Studenica monastery, 1995; Krusevac, 2000), exclusively attended by Byzantine scientists from Serbia.

After Ferjancić retired in 1994, Ljubomir Maksimović (b. 1938) became the chair of the Seminar, and after the death of the former in 1998 he also became the director of the Institute. He took over both duties under very difficult and special general conditions of delayed transition in Serbia, the UN sanctions on SR Yugoslavia and international isolation of the country. The principle of historical distance would demand that our overview of the history of the institution of Byzantine studies in Serbia, namely the activities of the Seminar and the Institute, should stop at this point, with a note that at the end of the second millennium, the life of the Belgrade School was marked by the representatives of the older and internationally acclaimed generation of Serbian Byzantinists. Besides Ljubomir Maksimović, there were also Gojko Subotić (b. 1931) and Mirjana Živojinović, another pupil of Ostrogorsky, who all led the scientific projects or participated in them as the members of SANU, followed by Radivoj Radić (b. 1954), a distinguished middle-generation representative of the Belgrade School.

It is evident from this overview that the Seminar and the Institute were the axis of Byzantine studies as a scientific discipline in Serbia. However, other institutions and many individuals also contributed fundamentally to the development of the discipline. Space permits us to mention only a few of them at this point.

The strong and complex relationship between old Serbian art and Byzantine art opened up a whole new scientific field, which required interdisciplinary research. It was enabled primarily by the relative wealth of preserved archaeological artefacts, and over time the fact that some of the areas with numerous or particularly important monuments (Kosovo, Metohija, the northern part of the Vardar valley in Macedonia) became part of the Kingdom of Serbia after the Balkan Wars ended (1912–13). Lectures and scientific research in the fields of archaeology and art history were established at the FPh in Belgrade, as well as at the Institute of Archaeology of SANU and the Institute for Art History at the FPh. Several institutions created in Skopje after the First World War, and which lasted until the Bulgarian occupation in 1941 – such as the Scientific Society, the FPh and the Museum of Southern Serbia – gave Byzantine studies an important place, though not at an institutional level.

Mihailo Dinić (1899–1970) worked on topics relating to the Serbian Middle Ages, primarily based on material from the Dubrovnik Archives, and contributed significantly to Byzantine studies in Serbia in the research into Byzantine–South Slavic relations. The same applies even to a greater extent to his student and immediate successor at the chair of the Middle Ages National History at the FPh, Sima Ćirković (b. 1929). Besides his aforementioned contribution to the edition of the *VIINJ*, in cooperation with Božidar Ferjančić, he focused on Byzantine–Serbian relations in many of his works. Jovanka Kalić, professor of Medieval History at the FPh, collaborated too on the *VIINJ* edition, with the commentary on the excerpts of John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates, and made also numerous contributions on

different Byzantine–Serbian topics. The significant opus of Miodrag Purković (1907–76) is often neglected, especially his studies of Serbian church and dynastic prosopography.

The very beginnings in the field of history of old Serbian arts are linked primarily to Mihailo Valtrović (1839–1915), and then Vladimir Petković (1874–1956), Miloje Vasić (1869–1956), Milan Kašanin (1895–1981), Radoslav Grujić (1878–1955) and Nikolaj Lvovič Okunjev (1886–1949), while the rise and the greatest achievements in the research are primarily linked to Svetozar Radojčić (1909–78), and then also to some of his students, including Vojislav J. Đurić (1925–96), Gojko Subotić (b. 1931) and Gordana Babić (1932–93). Aleksandar Deroko (1894–1988) and Đurđe Bošković (1904–90) focused on old Serbian architecture, and around the second half of the twentieth century, their successor, Vojislav Korać (b. 1924), made an internationally acclaimed contribution to this field. Vladislav Popović (1930–99), a member of the French Institute, made a significant mark in the field of early Byzantine archaeology, while Vojislav Jovanović (1930–2005) complemented him in the field of old Serbian archaeology.

In discussing the emergence and consolidation of Byzantine studies in Serbia, we have focused on the people who contributed most, and have not mentioned many who are today working hard to preserve and advance that legacy.⁸ The contribution of scholars based in Serbia to Byzantine studies has been immense, but in many ways it has been limited by the fact that most scholarship was published only in a language that remains inaccessible to many Byzantinists, and to most other medievalists. Moreover, the Serbian contribution must be measured against similar contributions by scholars and institutions in neighbouring states and in western Europe and Russia.

NOTES

1 Barišić 1961.

2 Ćirković 1988.

3 Maksimović 1988.

4 Maksimović forthcoming.

5 Maksimović 1988; Radić 2008.

6 Ferjančić 1993.

7 Maksimović 2001.

8 For biographical and bibliographical details on all mentioned scholars see Ćirković and Mihaljčić 1997. For more recent material see entries on Ferjančić in *ZRVI* 38 1999/2000, on Ćirković in *ZRVI* 41 2004, on Subotić in *ZRVI* 44 2007 and on Radošević in *ZRVI* 45 2008.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

BYZANTIUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

—♦—
Johann P. Arnason

The stereotype of a monolithic, bureaucratic, feeble, corrupt, over-complicated and ineffective empire seems completely false.¹

Byzantium and its broader cultural world ought to be of particular interest to historical sociology. The very long duration of a cultural complex with its own permanent and exclusive political centre is already an attractive topic for comparative study, and a good *prima facie* reason to view the Byzantine experience from a civilizational angle. More specific points can be added in support of this approach. If it makes sense to speak of a Byzantine civilization, its unity and continuity were – for insiders as well as receptive and alien outsiders – to an unusually high degree bound up with imperial integration. The only clear case of an even closer and more lasting interconnection of this kind is the Chinese one. Some comments on differences and similarities may help to put the Byzantine record in perspective. Compared to Byzantium, which shared a classical legacy with other civilizations, the Chinese claim to imperial possession of a cultural tradition was more exclusive. On the other hand, China had to contend with counter-empires emerging on its Inner Asian frontier and combining imitation of its models with their own techniques of power. This factor was much less important in Byzantine history, but not quite absent; the Bulgarian empire is the most salient example. The Ottoman conquest of Byzantium and the surrounding region differed from the seventeenth-century Manchu conquest of China in fundamental respects. The Manchus took over an empire, whereas the Ottomans gradually absorbed a group of successor states (the properly imperial period of Byzantine history had come to an end in 1204). As for the results, Manchu rule may be seen as a final synthesis of Chinese and Inner Asian imperial traditions. By contrast, Ottoman expansion led to the triumph of one universal religion over another, with corresponding effects on political institutions and political culture; Byzantine inputs counted for something in the making of the Ottoman empire (so much so that historians have occasionally been tempted to describe it as a successor state), but their role was nowhere near that of Confucian traditions in the Manchu regime.

On the other hand, both Byzantium and China had a cultural impact beyond their political reach. Models of government as well as religious doctrines, rituals and institutions were adopted by states over which the empire had no effective control, and, in both cases, major transformations in that vein were initiated from the

periphery rather than from the centre (in that regard, there is some similarity between Kievan Rus in relation to Byzantium and Japan in relation to China). The Byzantine commitment to a universal religion, as opposed to the more ambiguous Chinese self-image of a superior culture, does not seem to have made as much difference to the dynamics of civilizational expansion as the ideological stance *per se* might suggest. Other contrasts emerge when it comes to the question of civilizational factors surviving their original frameworks. If it is justified to see the Byzantine empire as an early victim of western European expansion – 1204 was a more decisive turning point than 1453 – we can by the same token compare the post-imperial influence of Byzantine cultural patterns with the experience of non-European civilizations whose fragmented legacies continued to affect the course of history after the collapse of their traditional orders. By comparison with these later developments (including China as one of the most prominent cases), the Byzantine record of cultural afterlife is longer and more complicated. There was, as N. Iorga put it, a “Byzantium after Byzantium.” Although Iorga was particularly interested in the Byzantine heritage preserved through the Romanian principalities and their residual but continuous statehood (dependent on Ottoman overlords, but not in the same way as provinces under direct rule), he also had in mind the broader ramifications noted by other historians. Aspects of the Byzantine legacy interacted with more intact imperial traditions, both those embodied in the Ottoman regime and the Inner Eurasian ones inherited by the expanding Russian empire. At a later stage, both defensive and activist responses to the ascendant West were – in Russia and the Balkans – influenced by the Byzantine background, in elusive but not negligible ways. Finally, the main twentieth-century alternative to western modernity took shape in a historical environment that bore the marks of a Byzantine past. References to this source, often vague but not easily dismissed, haunt the literature on Soviet Communism.

Another glance at the Byzantine trajectory, with a more specific focus on its early phase, may suggest further issues for comparative historical inquiry. Historians now commonly think of Byzantium as one of three successor civilizations, sharing with western Christendom and Islam the cultural legacy of Greco-Roman civilization but dividing its geopolitical domain. The implications of this view are best understood in contrast to an earlier conception of late antiquity. Traditional images of the “decline and fall of the Roman Empire” (variously elaborated by successive generations, but most memorably presented in Gibbon’s classic work) have given way to the more complex model of a “transformation of the Roman world.” This change of perspective represents a major historiographical paradigm shift, and its consequences are still unfolding. The disregard for Byzantium, inherent in the traditional paradigm, reflects the marginal position to which the West had reduced a formerly significant other before it was destroyed by the third contestant in the post-Roman arena. Conversely, the new approach has developed hand in hand with a more adequate understanding of Byzantine problems and achievements. The endurance of imperial power in the East was not simply a matter of more solid structures. The centre and its hold on core territories had to be maintained against recurrent threats, all the more serious because this part of the empire was more directly exposed to challenges from the Persian rival. At the same time, the eastern empire was more vulnerable to dissonances within the new religious model of order than were the western regions. In the West, the early Arian version of heterodoxy was gradually eliminated, and the

papacy kept some distance from theological – more specifically Christological – controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries, whereas the disunity that they caused on the eastern side paved the way for the Islamic combination of a reformed monotheism and an alternative empire. The eastern core of the empire survived the Islamic assault, within massively contracted borders and in a structurally different shape; the “contained catastrophe” (W. Treadgold) of the seventh century may be seen as the definitive historical divide between late antiquity and the Byzantine World. For five centuries – the successful resistance to the Muslim siege in 717–18 and the western conquest in 1204 are obvious landmarks – a “downsized” and transformed empire proved capable of withstanding a series of onslaughts. The western empire had fallen apart in the fifth century, but compared to the medieval civilization that reunited its fragments, the eastern empire and its Byzantine successor faced a more sustained sequence of external threats; historical research has made it increasingly clear that the ability to survive them – and even to achieve temporary geopolitical gains – was due to adaptive changes, rather than to mere structural inertia. Interpretations of Byzantine history have, in short, shifted towards stronger emphasis on cultural and institutional vitality. Finally, the civilization that thus maintained its continuity against heavy odds was also the one most directly affiliated to Greco-Roman antiquity, and this was of some importance for other claimants to the same legacy. It can be argued, with good reasons, that both western Christendom and Islam drew on classical sources in more autonomous and innovative ways than Byzantine culture did, but, in both cases, transmission through Byzantine channels played a significant role. Here it must, however, be added that the cultural impact did not always depend on imperial presence: traditions surviving in territories conquered from Byzantium helped to consolidate the Islamic link to classical antiquity.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES: FROM WEBER TO EISENSTADT

For all the above reasons, the Byzantine experience ought to appear as an eminently promising field for comparative study. But it has, to put it mildly, not been given its due: in the context of historical-sociological inquiry, Byzantium is conspicuously under-represented. The most important pioneering work in this area, Max Weber’s unfinished comparative sociology of economic, political and religious formations, prefigures a persistent trend. Byzantine examples and issues are only briefly mentioned in connection with broader questions focused on other cases. In *Economy and Society*, Weber notes the Byzantine systematization of Roman law, but this achievement was, in his view, diminished by formal regression, and less important in its own right than in virtue of its influence on medieval western, Judaic and Islamic law; both the late Roman empire and its Byzantine successor rank among key examples of pre-modern bureaucracy, but take second place to the more fully developed Egyptian and Chinese models. As for the phenomenon of caesaropapism, often cited as a distinctive feature of the Byzantine imperial regime, Weber defines it as a complete subordination of priestly power to its worldly counterpart, but claims that this goal can, because of the “charisma of religion,” never be fully achieved, and that the ancient city-states came closer to it than Byzantium ever did. In short, the Weberian treatment of Byzantium is unfocused and dismissive, and there is no

suggestion that the Byzantine world might have to be considered alongside the major civilizations that became key themes of his comparative analyses.

S. N. Eisenstadt's discussion of Byzantium in his comparative study of imperial political systems, first published in 1963, is still the most noteworthy attempt to redress the balance and bring sociological perspectives to bear on this substantial segment of world history. As an exception to the rule, it merits a brief summary; and although the argument of Eisenstadt's book is structured in terms of general categories and criteria, the specific references to Byzantine examples add up to a clear-cut picture. The "historical bureaucratic empires" discussed in the book are of two kinds: early modern European ones, with overseas colonial possessions, and pre-modern ones based in different parts of the Afro-Eurasian macro-region and more or less closely linked to major civilizational complexes. Byzantium is a key member of the latter category (which also includes China, Sassanid Persia and Islamic empires, as well as some less significant cases), not only because of its long history and strong cultural identity; Eisenstadt also stresses the high levels of differentiation achieved by Byzantine state and society during a relatively long period of growth and consolidation. The state was the "strongest social factor," at the "centre of status and prestige" (90), and capable of subordinating economic life to political and cultural goals. The primacy of the state was backed up by a service-oriented bureaucracy and an army which Eisenstadt describes as "national," at least during Byzantium's golden age. But the interventionist stance of the imperial centre did not preclude mutually useful alliances with social forces, especially with a free peasantry which the imperial government tried to defend against aristocratic power. Eisenstadt even refers to "a society of small farmers and of artisans, organized and regulated for the interest of all" (344); he also stresses the comparatively effective representation of social groups in the political process (this decidedly idealizing view seems to reflect the now abandoned interpretation of "circus parties" as outlets for social conflicts). As for the key question of state and Church, Eisenstadt explicitly rejects the notion of caesaropapism as an oversimplification and argues that the relationship in question is best described as interdependence; but since this term would be equally applicable to Islamic and western Christian patterns, it does not grasp any specific Byzantine features.

The above characterization applies primarily to Byzantium during its middle period, from the seventh to the eleventh century. Against this background, the last four centuries of Byzantine history appear as a phase of all-round and continuing decline. A "gradual aristocratization and disintegration of the bureaucratic polity" (352) was accompanied by economic regression. In the end, a mere remnant of the Byzantine state was destroyed by a new wave of Islamic expansion, but this was only the final twist to a long process of decomposition and marginalization. In short, Byzantium, as portrayed by Eisenstadt, seems to exemplify, more instructively than most other cases, two aspects of imperial regimes: the ability to build institutions and mobilize resources on a superior scale, characteristic of their ascendant phases, and the regressive dynamics that tend to prevail in the longer run. The analysis of these changing patterns does not extend to Byzantium as a civilization, and when the focus of Eisenstadt's historical sociology shifted to the comparative study of civilizations, he redefined his frame of reference in a way that made Byzantium seem much less relevant to macro-historical comparisons. The main emphasis was now on cultural

traditions and civilizational patterns growing out of transformations during the “Axial Age” in the middle of the last millennium BC, as well as on the monotheistic world religions as sequels to the Axial turn. One consequence of this approach was that late antiquity was not given its due as a matrix of new civilizational trajectories.²

Although Eisenstadt’s account of Byzantium drew on a wide range of sources, there is no doubt that it was most strongly influenced by George Ostrogorsky’s *History of the Byzantine State*. Ostrogorsky’s work was long regarded as a standard account, and since the revision of his views is still in progress, a brief summary of basic points seems useful – all the more so because of the comparative sociological perspectives inherent in Ostrogorsky’s analyses but never spelt out in theoretical terms. The central part of the whole narrative is a very stark picture of collapse and rebuilding in the eastern part of the Roman world. At the beginning of the seventh century, the empire lay, as Ostrogorsky saw it, in ruins, and the catastrophe brought about by barbarian attacks and internal revolts as well as Persian reconquests was comparable to the disasters inflicted on western regions. The key difference was that in the eastern part of the empire, a central state was still strong enough to undertake the reconstruction that had to be done on a more fragmentary basis and at a much slower pace in the West. Although Ostrogorsky did not think of late antiquity as a distinctive and relatively self-contained period (recent scholarship has shifted decisively towards that view), it is clear that his interpretation puts the early seventh-century reform at the beginning of Byzantine history proper and more specifically of its heroic phase. Emperor Herakleios thus becomes a foundational figure, and Ostrogorsky credits him with a systematic planning of reforms (such as the new military organization based on the *themata*) which historians now tend to see as a slightly later and more improvised response to Islamic conquest. The reign of Basil II, marked by internal and external consolidation of an enlarged state, represents the culmination, but also the last effort of the heroic phase. If the survival of a dominant and active centre made the difference between Byzantine and western European paths of development, the other side of this contrast was that centrifugal forces were left on the outside and – unlike the feudal elites in western Europe – did not enter into a long-term process of state formation. In due course, the gradual strengthening of these rival aspirants to power derailed imperial strategies and exposed the state to an aristocratic takeover. This “feudal” regression, very different from the western European absorption and overcoming of feudalism, took place in two rounds: the brief and acutely unstable rule of the civil aristocracy after 1025 was succeeded by a more effective, but in the long run more self-destructive regime of the military nobility under the Komnenian dynasty. The fragmentation of the state structure made the empire increasingly vulnerable to aggression from east and west. Within this overall picture of rise, decline and terminal crisis (a re-enactment of the Roman trajectory in a different context, rather than a mere postscript to it), the Church appears – again in marked contrast to its western counterpart – only as a minor actor. Ostrogorsky rejected the notion of caesaropapism (the emperor was, as he put it, the protector but not the head of the Church), but stressed the structural superiority of the imperial state; occasional and limited victories of the Church over emperors venturing too far into its sphere could neither change this basic asymmetry nor affect the overall dynamic of Byzantine history in any significant way.³

Ostrogorsky's synthesis, however it was conditioned by circumstances and assumptions, has not proved easy to replace. It seems clear that no similarly authoritative overall interpretation has emerged from recent debates. But some basic corrections to his portrait of Byzantium are widely accepted and essential to new directions of historical research. The seventh-century transformation and its more drawn-out sequel are no longer understood in terms of a foundational project; rather, the changes in question are seen as multiple and not always coordinated responses to a whole series of major upheavals that affected both the external and the internal situation of the Byzantine World. The most massive factors were geopolitical: Justinian's failed and costly attempt to reunify the Roman empire was followed by a struggle for survival on two fronts, against the last offensive of Rome's long-standing rival in the East and against the last major incursion of Eurasian nomads into the mutating Roman world (the Avars), and then by the Islamic conquests that suddenly reduced Byzantine wealth and power to incomparably more modest dimensions. The measures taken to meet these challenges, most directly on the level of military organization, must have made an impact on the broader social fabric, but the specific consequences are disputed, and did not amount to the integrated socio-military reordering that Ostrogorsky attributed to the "heroic period" of Byzantine history. Moreover, the geopolitical disasters and the defensive innovations were accompanied by socio-economic shifts that changed the composition of the power elites as well as the relations between cities and countryside; there was no wholesale de-urbanization, but the relative weight of urban centres declined and their military as well as administrative functions took precedence over others. At the same time, however, the general contraction and impoverishment of urban life enhanced the exceptional prestige and prominence of the imperial capital. The all-round importance of Constantinople for Byzantine civilization seems unparalleled in history. After the massive diminution of the imperial realm, the Roman interplay of *urbs* and *orbis* was no longer possible; rather, the one unequalled urban centre became the refuge of pretensions that could never – after the sixth century – be translated into corresponding expansionist ambitions. All these changes raised problems that had to be solved through redefinitions of collective identity and political as well as religious authority. That aspect of the seventh-century transformation and its sequel is still the most controversial one.

The contrast between the heroic phase and the subsequent centuries of decline is now seen as vastly overdrawn. On the one hand, the notion of a socio-political alliance between the imperial centre and a free peasantry capable of military service has not withstood criticism; not that there were no cases of imperial intervention in favour of free peasants, but such episodes seem to have occurred within a complex setting where other patterns of alignment and confrontation were also at work. When imperial strategies took this turn, they were more directly grounded in fiscal considerations or changing conjunctures of the relationship between ruler and aristocracy than in any durable social commitment. On the other hand, Ostrogorsky's account of Byzantine decadence from the eleventh century onwards has given way to much more nuanced interpretations. The later centuries of Byzantine history were certainly not characterized by overall decline. It would be difficult to deny that the political order and its imperial centre underwent a crisis in the eleventh century, but, as Treadgold puts it, society became wealthier while the state became weaker, and

this was also one of the most creative phases of Byzantine culture; further cultural developments took place in the post-imperial and politically fragmented Byzantine world after 1204. Even if the symptoms of crisis, decline and collapse were most visible on the political level, recent scholarship suggests a more complex picture. Reconstructions of the imperial state, especially under the Komnenian dynasty after 1081 and, on a much smaller scale, by the thirteenth-century successor regime in Nicaea, are now seen as more significant than the traditional visions of decline would have it. To sum up, it may be said that the scenario of a predestined collapse, with or without the new round of geopolitical disasters that struck Byzantium from east and west during its final centuries, now seems less plausible than it once did. Another implication of these changing perspectives is that Ostrogorsky's account of the relationship between state and aristocracy has to be revised. There was a long-term growth of aristocratic power, but this process did not simply subvert the state from outside. Aristocratic clans and coalitions in pursuit of power drew on multiple sources, including positions within the state apparatus and the court society at its centre, and aristocratic forces could, under specific circumstances, strive to rebuild state structures rather than to weaken them.

A new and in many ways significantly revised version of Byzantine history is obviously in the making. But little has so far been done to spell out its lessons for comparative history and historical sociology. And no attempt has been made to link the emerging reinterpretation to broader perspectives of the kind exemplified by Eisenstadt's use of Ostrogorsky's work. This persistent neglect of the Byzantine case by scholars interested in comparative studies seems to be due to traditional prejudices and simplifications, no longer influential in the context of Byzantine studies but entrenched enough to block contact with other fields. More precisely, four invidious assumptions – interconnected but distinct and variously emphasized – have obstructed understanding of the Byzantine experience and its place in history. The most specific claim among these preconceptions, and therefore the most convenient starting point for a critical discussion, is the idea of “caesaropapism,” a supposedly complete and permanent subordination of religious institutions to the political centre, as a defining characteristic of Byzantine civilization. A second assumption has to do with origins and identity: Byzantium appears as a continuation – a distinctly inferior one – of the later Roman empire. Gibbon's account of the Byzantine finale to decline and fall is the classic statement of this view, but the underlying idea has had a more lasting influence on the treatment of Byzantine history. Together with the notion of caesaropapism, it suggests a one-sided and definitive solution to late antique disputes about the relationship between Church and empire. Both these preconceptions support a third one: the image of a stagnant society, if not in an absolute sense, then at least in relative terms, and especially in contrast to its more dynamic neighbours. This view appears more plausible when backed up by the two first assumptions: a fusion of political and religious authority, designed to favour the former and committed to the perpetuation of inherited models, is evidently not conducive to social dynamism. Finally, there was a persistent tendency – less clearly expressed than the other views in question, but reflected in earlier scholarship as well as in popular images of Byzantium – to underestimate the intercivilizational dimensions of Byzantine history. To be sure, neither the diffusion of Byzantine models beyond the orbit of imperial

control nor the ultimately disastrous conflicts with neighbouring civilizations could be ignored. But the originality of the civilizational complex that took shape around the Byzantine centre was long underestimated, and so was Byzantium's active role in the networks and processes that linked it to western Christendom and Islam.

All these conceptual obstacles have been overcome by recent scholarship on Byzantine history. Yet they still seem to obstruct comparative historical views of the field. A new, much more complex and dynamic vision of Byzantine history is in the making, but, so far, historical sociologists have not responded to it in a way comparable to Eisenstadt's use of Ostrogorsky's work. The need for a thorough reappraisal is obvious: Ostrogorsky's interpretations appear as partial corrections of earlier views that have now been subjected to much more thoroughgoing criticism. For one thing, his concept of "interdependence" points beyond "caesaropapism" but does not amount to an alternative model; for another, the idea of an imperial refoundation in the seventh century – though not to be confused with notions of continuing stagnation – obscures both the complex interrelations of continuity and discontinuity in the transition from late antiquity to the Byzantine period proper, and the changes occurring after what Ostrogorsky saw as a watershed setting the course for a whole epoch.

The following reflections are based on this perception of a discrepancy between the progress of Byzantine studies and the failure of comparative history and historical sociology to learn from it; there is no pretence to add anything to available knowledge of Byzantine history, but it may be useful to highlight some of the hitherto unassimilated lessons of more general significance, particularly with regard to Byzantium's place within the intercivilizational constellation that characterized the post-Roman millennium.

BEYOND CAESAROPAPISM AND CONTINUITY

Objections to the notion of caesaropapism were raised by many twentieth-century scholars, but the most decisive critique was developed by Gilbert Dagron, and the following comments draw most directly on his work.⁴ Although the case may now be regarded as closed on the level of Byzantine scholarship, the ghost of the discarded model continues to haunt discussions of the difference between eastern and western Christianity, and terminological ambiguity helps to maintain traditional views. One of the most influential living medievalists refers to Byzantium as a "caesaropapist world in which the king, the *basileus*, combines an imperial and a pontifical power."⁵ Taken literally, theocracy would mean the exact opposite (Dagron contrasts a "priest-king model" to a "king-priest model"), but it would be even less applicable to the Byzantine case. However untenable the caesaropapist thesis may be, there can be no doubt that the imperial centre exercised more power over the Church than the emperors of western Christendom could ever aspire to. This situation was not unrelated to broader geopolitical and intercivilizational contexts. After the failure of Justinian's reconquest and the loss of Syria and Egypt to the new Islamic empire, only the patriarch of Constantinople was left to face the imperial authority that shared the same exclusive centre; the late antique combination of Roman primacy with a vaguely defined but significant polyarchy within the Church

disappeared, and this may be seen as one of the formative aspects of the transition to a new civilizational setting.

It is relatively easy to refute the most explicit version of the caesaropapist thesis. The emperor was not the head of the Church; he remained dependent on the Church for legitimizing purposes, and his power to appoint the patriarch did not mean that religious institutions were completely subordinated to the imperial administration; least of all did this apply to the monastic sector. No emperor ever succeeded in imposing doctrinal changes; the most serious efforts to do so belong to the prehistory or the very beginning of the Byzantine trajectory (Justinian and Herakleios are the prime examples). The most serious later imperial intervention in doctrinal matters, the iconoclast reform, was not an exclusively imperial affair, and it ended in defeat. As for the balance of power between the imperial centre and the Church, it changed in the course of Byzantine history, but it is not easy to identify any general trend. There were significant shifts towards more effective imperial control, but sometimes with ambiguous results. The late eleventh-century reconstruction of the imperial centre under the Komnenoi was accompanied by efforts to restore control over the Church, but the long-term result seems to have been an institutional consolidation that helped to strengthen the position of the Church *vis-à-vis* political authorities in the post-imperial phase of Byzantine history.

The historical vicissitudes of imperial, patriarchal and monastic power reflect a cultural problematic that also opens up broader perspectives for comparative views. Religious cultures centred on radically transcendent visions of divinity – most notably the monotheistic traditions – have a double-edged impact on political power: the transcendent dimension can be invoked to upgrade authority but resists complete absorption into the political realm. If the notion of caesaropapism, in a sense going beyond specific institutions, is taken to mean a wholesale appropriation of religious authority by the political centre, that kind of unilateral fusion was as impossible in Byzantium as in other civilizations marked by the same separation of realms. But the Byzantine way of dealing with this basic predicament can only be understood in the specific context of Roman and post-Roman transformations. The Christianization of the empire had changed a counterculture into a dominant religion, but at the same time confronted it with an insoluble problem: the image of the Christian emperor had to be incorporated into a religious framework to which it could never be definitively adapted. The emperor had to be transfigured into a representative of God and a protector of the Church, but that also empowered him to pursue ambitions that could conflict with established Christian models. Various paradigms were available to the political theology that developed around the converted centre. The emperor could, in the most extreme case, claim a role analogous and complementary to that of the Saviour; he could aspire to a quasi-apostolic status; episcopal or priestly authority, added to the more exclusive political sovereignty, appeared as a more modest and viable option. On all levels, the imperial extension of the Christian imaginary became a source of rivalries, perceived threats and doctrinal disputes.

The three successor civilizations inherited this problematic from the late Roman empire, but its logic unfolded in very different settings. At first sight, there is a stark contrast between Islamic and western Christian patterns on the one hand and Byzantine ones on the other: the two former were marked by breaks of a kind that did not

occur in Byzantium. The Islamic trajectory began with a new fusion of religious and political authority (the prophetic model); it emerged in a peripheral region but gave rise to an expansionist dynamic and a counter-empire that conquered much of the eastern Roman one. However, the Islamic message was, from the outset, in large measure a response to difficulties and dilemmas exemplified by Christian schisms, and, by the same token, triumphant Islam was bound to rediscover the problems inherent in the vision of *sacrum imperium*. But the later long-drawn-out search for solutions – marked by gradual retreat from the original attempt to impose a unified religious and political centre – was heavily influenced by a tradition external to the Greco-Roman world: the Persian one. On the western Christian side, there was more continuity. Even so, the Christianization of the empire had to be repeated in the new context of the barbarian kingdoms, where traditions shaped by long interaction with the Roman empire but never absorbed by it also came into play. At the same time, the survival and resurgence of the papacy as a civilizational centre entailed a redistribution of authority.

On closer examination, the Byzantine continuity of the Christian empire must be qualified. As the empire lost its wealthiest territories and became a minor power compared to its main adversary, the discrepancy between imperial imagery and geopolitical reality became acute; simultaneously, the struggle for survival made the imperial self-image more important to Byzantine identity. The same historical experience, however, raised questions about Byzantine claims to special status within a sacred history; the setbacks could be interpreted as evidence of divine sovereignty at a level further removed from imperial representation. And as John Haldon emphasizes, “the absolute autocratic power of the ruler came . . . to be more clearly associated with a host of spiritual guardians and guarantors.”⁶ These divergent developments led to new perceptions and interpretations of the central cultural problematic. The view that now seems to prevail among historians is that it took a long time – from the seventh to the ninth century – to work out a viable solution to these problems. The iconoclast controversy of the eighth and early ninth centuries is probably best seen as an episode within that longer and more complex process. One noteworthy aspect, strongly emphasized by Dagron, was extensive use of the Old Testament for the purposes of political theology. This seems to have gone further than similar trends in the West, and nothing comparable occurred in the Islamic world, where the corresponding cultural space was largely occupied by Persian statecraft. The readjustment of the religious framework, with inescapable implications for the imperial centre and its sphere of authority, intertwined with the geopolitical, economic and social changes that marked the end of late antiquity and the beginning of a new period. To sum up, then, the Byzantine version of the transition is not simply to be described in terms of institutional continuity contrasted with discontinuities elsewhere in the post-Roman world; while it remains true that the emphatic maintenance of an identity rooted in the Roman past (but still serving to make sense of a more visible changing environment) set Byzantium apart from its neighbours, there was nevertheless a seventh-century turning point with ramifications extending into the ninth century. A multidimensional transformation was brought about by a long-term process.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DYNAMICS

The image of Byzantium as a stagnating society was never easy to reconcile with evident historical facts, and now seems to have disappeared from informed debates; its lingering influence on non-specialist opinion is due to exaggerated projections of contrasts with medieval western Europe. The historical dynamic that has been brought to light is multifaceted, and it reflects changing balances of internal and external forces. These patterns of change can be analysed from various angles, but given the dominance of the imperial centre, a brief outline can start with trends and transformations affecting its social setting. To proceed in this way is not to suggest that imperial control and authority were invariant aspects of Byzantine history; the centre underwent changes and suffered setbacks, but its enduring presence makes it an obvious point of access to more complex connections.

To avoid oversimplified notions of the imperial centre, it seems useful to distinguish three interconnected aspects. The imperial office (to use Dagron's term), inseparably but never unproblematically linked to the *Kaiseridee* emphasized by many historians; the capital city, whose unique and uncontestable centrality was one of the basic constraints affecting the exercise of power; and the particular constellation of socio-political forces within the capital. The people of Constantinople, the senate, the Church and the army were permanent players in the field of imperial politics, of major importance when succession problems had to be settled, and to a disputed extent recognized as sources of legitimacy. Historians have found it difficult to agree on the status of dynastic legitimacy in Byzantium. For present purposes, it seems enough to say that recurrent efforts to impose the dynastic principle always had to compromise with other conceptions of supreme authority, and the resultant arrangements were markedly unstable. When an extreme form of dynastic privilege was established (under the Komnenoi after 1081), it proved conducive to new conflicts and ended in a particularly acute crisis. The regular involvement of other forces in the making, maintenance and unmaking of emperors has led some analysts (especially Hans-Georg Beck) to speak of a Byzantine constitutionalism, rooted in Roman traditions and comparable to medieval western European developments.⁷ But this thesis has not been widely accepted; it seems more appropriate to stress the western Christian separation of papacy, empire and kingship as a precondition for a new development of constitutionalism. As for the Byzantine constellation, it can more plausibly be claimed – as Michael Angold does in this volume – that major crises brought the otherwise less visible role of participant forces into the open, and that their interplay did not always follow the same rules. It can also be argued that this latent but intermittently active pluralism of the centre made it possible to preserve a certain space for political reflection. A sustained tradition of political heterodoxy could not develop in Byzantium; attempts at autonomous political theorizing were very few before 1204, but not insignificant, and currents of that kind became stronger during the post-imperial phase.⁸

The forces active at the centre were, to a varying extent, also present in the provinces (this is least applicable to the broader urban population: the prime example of popular revolt outside the capital, the civil war in Thessalonika, belongs to the very different post-imperial setting). The senate can be seen as an offshoot of aristocratic society, and the changing relationship between imperial and aristocratic power is

central to the history of the Byzantine state.⁹ On this point, the classic account of a feudal elite rolling back the imperial state and setting Byzantium on the path to decline has been replaced by more complex interpretations and more nuanced comparisons with other cases, especially with western Christendom. The specific concept of feudalism that can still be applied to a component of medieval western Christian civilization (not to the social order as a whole) seems misplaced in the Byzantine context, but elements of a feudal regime were present in more inchoate forms, and comparisons can be grounded at that level. Evelyne Patlagean's recent reconstruction of the Byzantine trajectory suggests a framework for comparative analysis: as she argues, the links of kinship and fealty, both essential to the building of feudal institutions, were also operative in Byzantine society, but contained by the surviving imperial centre, its fiscal apparatus and its public (not patrimonial) character, and therefore barred from developing into a coherent feudal pattern. In this setting, aristocratic power blocs could emerge and draw on resources external as well as internal to the state. But there were no estates and no constituted nobility; as another author puts it, "there was no general translation of family-held economic, military and bureaucratic power into political capacity."¹⁰ From this point of view, the rise of the Komnenian dynasty can indeed be seen as an aristocratic takeover, but of a very particular kind. To quote Patlagean, Byzantium did not experience the "feudal paradox" (state formation taking a detour through the feudal fragmenting of sovereignty), but there was, in the last stage of the imperial phase, a "statist paradox": "public power and its rights were appropriated in a way that left them entirely intact."¹¹ As for post-imperial trends, they came undeniably closer to western-type feudal regimes, but in a new environment, geopolitically unstable and with very limited scope for further development.

The final comments to be added concern Byzantine relations with the surrounding world, and especially with the other post-Roman civilizations. Earlier views on this part of the Byzantine record tended to equate civilization and empire, and thus to oversimplify the often divergent dynamics of cultural and political expansion. On the other hand, imperial rule, prestige and imagery were key components of the civilizational pattern that could spread beyond imperial borders. The emperor was, as God's representative and guardian of the Christian community, an integral part of the religious framework adopted by emerging states outside the sphere of imperial control; the continuity of Roman imperial authority remained an essential precondition for the claims that set Byzantium above other cultural paradigms of power; at the same time the Byzantine example of monarchic rule at its most elaborate became a model which ambitious neighbours could emulate, rival or even – if conditions seemed favourable – aspire to replace. Dimitri Obolensky's concept of the Byzantine Commonwealth was meant to grasp this interplay of cultural and political forces on a trans-imperial scale.¹² There is no doubt that it did much to sensitize historians to the dimensions of Byzantium as a civilizational phenomenon; but the intended analogy to the British Commonwealth was in some ways misleading, and certainly not well suited to comparative purposes. In that context, it may be useful to summarize the main reasons why it now seems inadequate.

For Obolensky, the "commonwealth" was primarily made up of the Slavic states and cultures that were converted to eastern Christianity. But the zone of Byzantine influence also included the Caucasian world, where the Christianization of indigen-

ous kingdoms with strong ethnic identities and subject to both Roman and Persian influence preceded closer relations with Byzantium. Another very specific region was the Mediterranean frontier where the borders of Byzantine civilization overlapped with those of western Christendom in places of major importance to both sides (Venice, Rome before the eleventh-century turn and Sicily were the prime cases in point). But the model of the commonwealth can also be questioned in regard to internal dynamics of its core region. Three key episodes – the Moravian, the Bulgarian and the Kievan – sum up the history of relations between the Byzantine centre and the Slavic extension of eastern Christianity. The involvement of Byzantine missionaries in the brief ascendancy of the Moravian state was obviously linked to the more competitive turn of interaction with western Christendom after 800, but the main unintended consequence was geocultural rather than geopolitical, and decisive for the subsequent episodes: the formation of a vernacular literary language, hardly conceivable without the Byzantine input, but transmitted far beyond its original context. The Christianization of Bulgaria, very actively promoted by Byzantine leaders, gave rise to a counter-empire that challenged Byzantium on its own civilizational ground; after the tenth-century Byzantine conquest, the Bulgarian empire was resurrected on a less external basis, and the conflict terminated by Basil II's much mythicized victory can – as Michael Angold argues in this volume – be seen as a civil war. Finally, the Christianization of Kiev Rus took place in a setting where there was no possibility of direct imperial control, only a vague and inconsequential acceptance of the emperor's symbolic supremacy, and limited but in the long run flexible scope for imitation by indigenous rulers. The long-term result is perhaps best described as a composite civilization with significant but never exclusively dominant Byzantine aspects.

All these processes and constellations point beyond the model of the commonwealth. They also suggest ways of understanding Byzantine relations with the two neighbouring civilizations. In a recent essay, Jonathan Shepard refers to "Byzantium's overlapping circles"; the overlapping may be seen as not only a matter of regional intertwining (disputed border zones, cultural and political, as in the northern part of south-eastern Europe and in the Caucasus, or cases of enduring Byzantine influence reaching into the heartlands of western Christendom and Islam, as in the parts of Italy marked by Byzantine presence and, on a very different level, in the Near Eastern Christian communities under Islamic rule), but also of the same basic factors at work within and beyond the Byzantine World, albeit in widely divergent ways.¹³ Both imperial statehood and Orthodox religious identity were important in intercivilizational contexts, but they did not combine in the same fashion as in the constitution of a Byzantine civilizational sphere, and their separate impacts were much more diffuse. The limited reconquest of Near Eastern territories that followed the ninth-century reconsolidation of the empire was clearly of some significance to the middle period of Byzantine history; attempts to claim some kind of imperial authority in the West, up to and including the twelfth-century dynastic and diplomatic manoeuvres of Manuel I, were unsuccessful in the long run, but essential to the self-representation of the Byzantine state. On the western Christian and Islamic sides, this state remained a significant other, both as an embodied tradition of statecraft whose lessons made sense in other cultural worlds, and as a challenge to be matched or overcome (the constitutive adversarial relationship was most extreme in the case of the early

Islamic “jihad state”). There was, apart from very brief episodes at the beginning of Christianization, no significant expansion of Byzantine Christianity at the expense of the other monotheistic religions, but the culture that had crystallized around it was capable of transmitting cultural skills and legacies in eastern as well as western directions. The ramifications of such encounters have only recently been properly appreciated by historians.

NOTES

- 1 Herrin 2007: 269. Thanks are due to Paul Stephenson for encouraging me to write this chapter, and for useful exchanges on Byzantium; conversations and correspondence with John Haldon, Jonathan Shepard and Vladimír Vavřínek have also been helpful.
- 2 See Eisenstadt 1963, 1993: 90, 344, 352.
- 3 See Ostrogorsky 1968.
- 4 See Dagron 2003a.
- 5 Le Goff 2001: 6.
- 6 Haldon forthcoming.
- 7 See Beck 1994.
- 8 See Fögen 1993 and Angelov 2007.
- 9 See Stephenson in this volume ch. 2.
- 10 Fögen 1993: 58.
- 11 Patlagean 2007: 394.
- 12 See Obolensky 1971.
- 13 See Shepard 2006b.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

BYZANTIUM'S EUROPEAN FUTURE*



Paul Stephenson

As I write this brief afterword, in February 2009, an exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts in London is drawing the popular gaze to *Byzantium 330–1453*. Of the various treasures gathered from across, principally, Europe, among the most precious are those dating before AD 700, the imprecise but broadly observed starting date for contributions to this volume. My eye was drawn to two fourth-century pieces: a cameo with a warrior horseman, perhaps Constantine, now kept in Belgrade, and the “Projecta Casket,” in embossed and partially gilt silver, from the British Museum; to ivory diptych leaves lent by Liverpool, London and Florence, celebrating consuls of the fifth and sixth centuries; and to the magnificent silver plates depicting scenes from the life of David, discovered in Cyprus and kept in Nicosia.¹ Are these late Roman, late antique or early Byzantine? one might reasonably ask. An equally reasonable answer would be that they are all of these, and that while they are distinct from it, they are also the foundation for the art of the Byzantine World, c. 700–1453. Thus one can delight in but also locate in a developing tradition – without denying “external” influences or ignoring the fierce academic argument surrounding them – the stunning ivory triptychs from the Louvre and Vatican Museums; the ivory of Constantine VII crowned by Christ, lent by Moscow’s Pushkin Museum; the glorious twelfth-century icon of the Archangel Michael, in silver gilt on wood with cloisonné and enamel, plundered from Constantinople to be stashed in the treasury of San Marco, Venice; and the series of magnificent ivory caskets, carved between the later ninth and eleventh centuries, including the “David Casket,” the “Veroli Casket” and the “Troyes Casket.”²

While Byzantinists are delighted that their arcane specialism has received such attention, and are grateful for the opportunity to see such treasures gathered in one place, many have been struck by broad popular confusion: what is this exhibition all about? This is in striking contrast to the two most recent exhibitions held at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, mentioned in the Introduction.³ Another recent exhibition is instructive. Hadrian, a Roman emperor who reigned for twenty-one years, drew many thousands into the British Museum through the summer of 2008.⁴ Hadrian had the sense to build a wall in northern England, which was begun during his visit to the province in 122. Only one Byzantine emperor ever visited England, in

1400–1, leaving no lasting impression. The British public cannot easily connect with Byzantium, and the exhibition at the RA does not invite them to try. Upon my first visit, early on a Friday evening, I was struck by the number of Greeks and Slavs among those attending, who feel an affinity for this culture, for the reasons set out in the preceding chapters.

The exhibition and its catalogue are not, of course, devoted to the legacy of Byzantium in today's Europe.⁵ However, the catalogue's two forewords, by the serving Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and of Greece, wish to make that connection. Gordon Brown considers the exhibition "a timely reminder of our links with the peoples and the nations of the past" and an opportunity to explore "the extraordinary influences of Byzantium." He does not specify where or how. Kostas Karamanlis is more didactic, stating that the "unfair omission" of Byzantium in the "story of Europe" is only now being addressed:

After centuries of division and conflict, Eastern and Western Europe can look forward to a common, promising future within the framework of the European Union and celebrate their shared cultural roots. As Europeans seek to define what our continent stands for, the study of Byzantium is becoming of paramount importance. Its heritage, shared not only by Europeans, but also by citizens of nations in the three continents over which it once extended, can help us foster the common values that bring us together and understand the causes and natures of our differences.⁶

Politicians will always dwell on the political, and those in office today are concerned with tomorrow not yesterday. It was not the remit of the curators, whose achievement was to secure the loans of so many and such treasures, to contribute to a political discussion. Yet if Karamanlis is right, this is a missed opportunity. When the treasures now displayed at the RA have been returned to their museums, to be displayed according to national taste, they will form elements of a common past in Nicosia and Athens, in Belgrade, Moscow and St Petersburg, but will remain alien and exotic in Paris, Berlin and London. The frontiers of the past are firmly drawn, and for those in the West the many heirs of Byzantium remain beyond the border.

Despite Karamanlis' hopes and expectations, Byzantium is notable now, as always, for its absence from discussion of Europe's future, although its legacy is central to the pasts of so many member states of the European Union. Averil Cameron has drawn attention to this recently in her contribution to the Blackwell series "The Peoples of Europe," *The Byzantines*, and at greater length in a provocative paper entitled "The Absence of Byzantium," published in both English and Greek, which has provoked a sustained discussion in the journal *Nea Hestia*.⁷ In an ethnic sense, as Cameron notes, the Byzantines were not a people, for Byzantine is not an ethnic designation. That is equally true of European, which does not embrace simply those who live in its north-western portions.

The popular perception of Byzantium in western Europe consists largely of received truths: Constantine's conversion to Christianity condemned the grandeur of Rome to a millennium of decline, of empty Orthodox ritual, monkish obscurantism and imperial decadence. With the dead hand of the Church and the limp wrists at court guiding affairs, the empire simply waited, sybaritically, to succumb to the

vigour of the western Crusaders and the backlash of the Muslim Turks. And thence its only worthwhile component, its learning, was transferred to the West, and the post-Roman histories of the peoples of Europe extracted from its writings.⁸

The decadence of Byzantium was a western concern for centuries. Its most eloquent and complete articulation is still to be found in Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, first published 1776–88 in both England and France. Scholars have returned often to Gibbon's ideas and preoccupations, to examine and question his thesis of “decline.” This is particularly pertinent in the light of contemporary thought on the “World of Late Antiquity,” a beguiling age of saints and martyrs, which stands astride the sack of Rome in AD 476, illuminating the so-called “Dark Ages.” Just a few decades ago late antiquity did not exist, until Averil Cameron and Peter Brown cut it free from the “Later Roman Empire.” But even without the appearance of late antiquity, Rome's decline would have fallen out of vogue. In the post-colonial academy of the 1970s to 1990s, revision of the notion of decline was imperative, predicated on the premise that no society is better than another, merely different. Where no hierarchy exists it is impossible to posit notions of decline; one speaks instead of “transformation.” Transformation suited the political climate in western Europe in the 1970s to 1990s, where a union was being forged of nation-states with long histories of mutual hostility. More recently, since the turn of the millennium, attention has returned to decline, notably in popular historical works by Bryan Ward-Perkins and Peter Heather. These are notable not just for the attention they have received, but also for their lack of attention to Byzantium.⁹ Political and economic circumstances appear suddenly to have caught up with the scholarship. We are now, once again, in an age of decline, and this may benefit Byzantium, which was ignored by those who would transform the European past in an age of prosperity.

If one accepts – and it is a big “if” – that it should be an imperative of the European Union to recover a common heritage for a unified Europe, what might this be? Where are the frontiers drawn? When is the frontier? The Roman empire, which stretched across Germania and Gaul, incorporating the barbaric extremities of Thule (Britannia), cannot satisfactorily perform this function (although not for the reasons posited by the current Mayor of London).¹⁰ First, since the Enlightenment, Rome has served as a model for numerous oppressive regimes. Second, Rome was aggressively militaristic and politically conservative: hardly the ethos for an incipient twenty-first-century superpower (in the eyes of many Europeans, if not all American neoconservatives). Third, Rome's was not a north-western empire, but a Mediterranean empire, geographically marginal to the core of the EU. Fourth, the Roman empire contained numerous difficult peripheral regions that many in the new Europe feel the union could do better without. Beyond Istanbul, the magnificent ruins at Ephesus in Turkey bear witness to that country's *Romanitas*. But Turkish entry into the EU is highly problematic, despite the best efforts of some who consider it central to western/NATO policy in the Middle East. With the extensive remains of Carthage long under excavation, we do not need St Augustine of Hippo to remind us that Rome reached to North Africa. Indeed, many in Germany and France do not want to be further reminded of Europe's links with those regions, as they experience widely publicized social problems associated with post-colonial mass immigration. French President Nicolas Sarkozy's election pledge to forge a Mediterranean union has been quietly shelved.

So the Roman empire cannot be the historical antecedent of the EU. Instead, a more acceptable, geographically and ethnically suitable successor has been identified, by philosophers and theorists such as Rémi Brague, but also by historians and archaeologists, art historians and theologians. The ideal precursor to twenty-first-century Europe is, it has been determined, Latin Christendom, forged from the “barbarian” successor states of Rome, and emerging into the High Middle Ages as a northern European entity centred on France and Germany. The single figure most greatly revered was Charlemagne, a ruler of both Germans and Franks, crowned emperor in Rome. A recent and massive European Science Foundation research project (1993–8), “The Transformation of the Roman World,” supported exhibitions across the EU, many attracting crowds far larger than those currently to be seen in the Royal Academy.

The Christianity of Latin Christendom is that of Rome, not of Constantinople or Antioch, and this was made plain in the failed – or perhaps merely stalled – campaign to have a reference to Christian values and traditions in the preamble to an EU constitution.

Where, then, does this leave Byzantium, which endured even as the “barbarians” carved out successor states from the western rump of the empire? Which eastern Roman emperor, or empress, might be placed beside Charlemagne? Should Byzantium not also serve as a model for Europe, notably in its interactions with the Middle East? “The Absence of Byzantium” in European discourse is all the more shocking when one considers the substantial realignments of the past five years, with four heirs to Byzantium – Greece, Cyprus, Romania and Bulgaria – now full members of the EU, and many more – Albania, Serbia, the Republic of Macedonia and Turkey – who will in future apply for membership.¹¹ The greatest bar to fuller integration of these nations, and their national pasts, is the worrisome fact that between Byzantium and the EU, they were all for periods under some form of Ottoman Turkish control. Byzantium’s heirs were subjects of Islam, their Christian traditions and values were “oriental” and therefore not European.

Until the admission of Cyprus in May 2004, the only Byzantine heir within the EU was Greece. Cyprus has always been the crossroads between Europe and the Middle East, but history is taught in schools using textbooks imported from Greece. Therefore, its children embrace the Greek vision of nationhood, which from the mid-nineteenth century has vigorously promoted the classical and Byzantine heritage and disavowed the period of Ottoman rule, the *Tourkokratia*. Similar national traditions founded in the medieval period have been forged in Bulgaria and Romania, both admitted to the EU in January 2007. The geographical frontiers of Europe’s past have shifted definitively to the East but the conceptual frontiers have not kept pace. It is imperative that the diversities and commonalities of Europe’s post-Byzantine states are more fully explored and integrated within a broader European framework, to place alongside the diversities and commonalities of Latin Christendom. The frontiers of the past in Europe must be realigned to include Byzantium, and the Ottoman period cannot remain concealed. To add extra emphasis to Karamanlis’ words, a broad popular appreciation of the Byzantine World is an essential prerequisite for “planning our Mediterranean and European future.”

NOTES

- * I thank Averil Cameron for her many important comments on this short chapter.
- 1 Cormack and Vassilaki 2008: 72–3, 74, 80, 86–7. The David Plates now kept at New York's Metropolitan Museum did not travel to London.
- 2 Cormack and Vassilaki 2008: 112, 117, 124–5, 126, 132–4.
- 3 See above, pp. xxii–xxiii. This will perhaps have frustrated the curators, one of whom offered his reflections on the staging of the 1997 exhibition shortly afterwards: Cormack 1998 focused on the discourse of “centre and periphery.” See also Brown, P. (1997).
- 4 Oppen 2008.
- 5 Cyril Mango offers a pellucid but brief historical introduction in Cormack and Vassilaki 2008: 25–33. The “lack of context” was one of the criticisms levelled at the London exhibition, and a symposium organized by Cormack, “Wonderful Things: Byzantium through its Art,” held in March 2009, promised to address this.
- 6 Cormack and Vassilaki 2008: 11.
- 7 Cameron 2006: viii–xii, 3–5; Cameron 2008.
- 8 See Reinsch in this volume.
- 9 Ward-Perkins 2005; Heather 2005; Cameron 2007.
- 10 Johnson 2006; Cameron 2008: 4.
- 11 See now, and exceptionally, the important papers gathered in Detrez and Segaert 2008. And for a compelling alternative history by a medievalist see Patlagean 2007.

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